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MY CAMPAIGN

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Charles V. F. Townshend

MY CAMPAIGN

By

MAJOR GENERAL
CHARLES VERE FERRERS TOWNSHEND
K. C. B., D. S. C.

VOLUME ONE

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PREFACE

IN order that military history should produce all the advantages that one has a right to expect from it, it should be accurate and true, not only in its recital of the facts it has to trace, but in its exposé of the causes which had more or less influence on the events with which it deals.

Such history is difficult to write when the events are recent and the susceptibilities of soldiers have to be encountered; but, when I reflect that official documents are sometimes exaggerated as regards success, while reverses are diminished and glossed over, I prefer to tell my own story, and to write it from my diaries, for there is no more certain or more legitimate way of impressing public opinion than a plain statement of facts which cannot be disputed and the bearing of which cannot be misunderstood.

The exploits of my soldiers were great in themselves and great in their consequences, for we conquered over three hundred miles of territory by our three victories, all of which were battles of manœuvre. The victories of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon—second to none in the glorious records of the Indian Army—are signal examples of heroic conduct and devoted zeal on the part of the troops I commanded; I trust that the military student will be interested in my dispositions for those battles.

It will be seen that I always applied the principle of the mass against the enemy's weakest point by using the Turning Manœuvre with the Principal Mass of my force against the adversary's flank and rear; that is to say, against that flank of the enemy which was his weakest point by the simple fact that it lay nearest his natural line of retreat, which is always his line of communication. Meanwhile, I pinned the enemy *in front* by a holding attack with my Minimum Force. Thus I carried out the doctrine of Napoleon and Moltke.

While in Simla I remarked to Sir Beauchamp Duff that in order to take Baghdad I should require 30,000 to 40,000 men, in which case I would guarantee not only to take it but to hold it. I told him it was not for me to point out that it was a violation of the principle of Economy of Force to undertake the strategic offensive in a secondary theatre of the war with inadequate forces, that in a secondary theatre the defensive is indicated until such time as the decisive offensive is taken in the principal theatre. He said: "I entirely agree with you, Townshend. Not one inch shall you go beyond Kut-al-Amara unless I make you up to 30,000 or 40,000 men. We have settled that you are now to advance from Amarah, fight Nureddin Pacha, and occupy Kut-al-Amara, which is of such strategic importance that we must have it." This I promised to do—and the result was my victory of Kut-al-Amara and my occupation of that place.

After this victory I indicated to Sir John Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, that in

order to take Baghdad I must have two divisions—say, 30,000 men. Otherwise, there was a strong probability of disaster. But General Nixon was determined that I should proceed without reinforcements. There was, accordingly, nothing for me to do but to obey, though such a task with a handful of troops was one at which Bonaparte or Hannibal might have despaired. And its magnitude will be the better appreciated when it is considered that General Maude, to effect the same task, was given 113,000 to 120,000 troops, as against my 13,000, with a full proportion of guns, supplies, steamers, railways, etc.

Although the advance was against my judgment, and only boldness of manœuvre and shock action could possibly give success in such an enterprise, I felt that, if it could be done, possibly I could do it, for I had absolute confidence in my command.

That Ctesiphon was not a decisive victory was due to the fact that, at the moment when I had rolled up the enemy's left flank and the Turkish Army of about 18,000 men was in plain rout, Khalil Pacha, with a fresh army corps from the Caucasus, appeared on the scene, like Blücher at Waterloo. In spite of this, I determined to stand and fight till nightfall, for so great had been the carnage that I felt confident the Turks would retreat under cover of darkness. In this way Ctesiphon was very like Marengo. When morning came the Turks had retreated behind the Diala River some seven miles away, and I found myself with 4,500 killed and wounded, out of 8,500 bayonets, a loss of over 33 per cent. of my total force!

With the Turkish 6th Army united before me and entrenching behind the Diala River, there was now no question of an advance. Only one thing remained, and that was to retreat to Kut and dig in.

I remained in front of the Turkish 6th Army for four days, whilst I quietly evacuated my wounded down river and gave out that I meant to remain at Ctesiphon; then I slipped away one night when the Turkish Army was extending its left arm to envelop me and cut my retreat to Kut. In a retreat of ninety miles, with the Turkish Army on my heels, I never left a gun or a wounded man behind, and I took 1,500 Turkish prisoners with me. On the 1st December, I turned and fell upon the Turkish advanced guard in front and flank, and literally wiped it out; resuming the march to Kut without further molestation. The discipline of my troops and their suppleness in manœuvre was perfect. Soldiers will understand what this means after such a battle as Ctesiphon—where we had the most desperate bayonet fighting, where the Turkish trenches were absolutely heaped with dead, where guns were taken and retaken at the point of the bayonet, and where we had casualties amounting to 33 per cent. of our effectives. The conduct of such a retreat is, I venture to think, the hardest test which can be put to a general or to the rank and file under his command.

The resolution I took—to stand at Kut—saved us from being simply kicked out of Mesopotamia. All Mesopotamia would have risen behind us had I continued my retreat past this point, which is at the

bifurcation of the Tigris and Hai Rivers, whence Feld-Marschall Von der Goltz, then commanding the 6th Turkish Army, could have directed a strategic turning movement *viâ* the Hai to Nasiriyeh, which was only some three or four days' march from Basra. To stand at Kut was the only way to enable Government to bring reinforcements from overseas and to repair the disaster.

But I bargained to be relieved in two months; or else, as I wired to Sir John Nixon, it would be impossible to relieve us. For that reason and for other very grave ones, I called for relief early. I had urgent cause for doing so. The assault by the Turks on Christmas night, 1916, all but succeeded. Only the valour of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry saved me that night. By daylight their assaulting columns were expelled with the bayonet and the grenade, with tremendous losses. Owing to the great floods and the swollen Tigris, it was impossible for me to cut my way out, and Kut, like Genoa, fell from starvation, after hardships mental and physical difficult to describe, and after a strenuous defence of just under five months—the longest, I believe, in British military history since the wars of Dutch William and Marlborough. Not till my men were dying on an average of over twenty a day from starvation, and not till I was ordered by wireless by the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia to make what terms I could, as he was unable to relieve me in the time, did I surrender.

In the same way as Massèna's stand at Genoa, in 1800, made it possible for Bonaparte to fight and win the critical battle of Marengo, or as Osman Pacha's stand at Plevna gave time for the Turks to bring reinforcements from Asia Minor, so my five months' stand at Kut enabled Government to unite in Mesopotamia reinforcements from overseas, and eventually, with an overwhelming force of some 120,000 men, to advance on and occupy Baghdad.

Before being taken into captivity I obtained a written promise from the Turkish Commander-in-Chief that my men should be treated honourably and with care, and I used the considerable interest I possessed at Constantinople to better their condition. The harsh and cruel treatment they suffered during their march into captivity was due solely to the instigation of the German staff officers, who surrounded Enver and, in fact, all the Turkish high command, whose idea for political reasons, as well as those of hatred, was to humiliate our men in the eyes of the inhabitants of Asia Minor. In October, 1918, when sent for by the Turkish Cabinet to help them in the matter of making terms with the British, I demanded the instant liberty of my command before I consented to act. This was at once granted.

As a prisoner of war I had the satisfaction of bringing about what I had failed to do in the field—I induced the Turks to surrender, thereby shortening the war in Europe by several months, and, as a natural consequence, thousands of lives were saved and millions of money.

It was settled in half an hour's conversation with Marshal Izzat Pacha in his room at the Sublime Porte on the afternoon of 17th October, 1918, and I left the same evening for the British Fleet with a promise that the Turks would open the Dardanelles. The conference was arranged directly I reached Mudros.

Austria surrendered directly she heard the news, and Germany in turn followed suit.

On the grounds that no one, either soldier or civilian, can judge of military operations unless he has a sound knowledge of the six great Fundamental Principles of War as established by Napoleon, I devote Chapter I to these principles, which were followed by his pupils Clausewitz and the great Moltke, and to-day by the German Great General Staff, and by Marshal Foch and the French Higher Command. Those who are not interested in military tactics will begin the book at Chapter 2, but I hope that many military students and many civilians, especially diplomats and Members of Parliament, will read it, for these principles form the so-called German Doctrine, which was applied both to the Army and the diplomacy of that highly efficient people.

CHARLES V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General.

Vere Lodge, Raynham,
6th August. 1919.

MY CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF WAR

THE Fundamental Principles of Strategy as established by Napoleon, the founder of modern strategy, apply equally to Strategy and Higher Tactics. These principles give a solution to any strategical or tactical problem which may be set, and they apply equally to war on sea and land, or in air.

Let us briefly enumerate these principles:—

A. The principal objective in strategy.
B. Economy of Force.
C. The Mass.
D. The Strategic Offensive.
E. Rapidity or Economy of direction.
F. Security.

A. The Principal Objective.

"The first objective should be to conquer the enemy's army." (Hohenlohe.)

"To seek from the commencement, with all his

forces, the bulk of the forces of the adversary." (Moltke.)

This is in fact the principle which stands out throughout the Napoleonic Wars.

A general direction must be given to the group of armies, and this general direction will evidently be imposed by military, political, perhaps even economic, considerations; in this way we come to a geographical objective.

In 1870, Moltke gave the following indications:

> "General direction, Paris; objective, the enemy—wherever he may be."

Moltke copied Clausewitz's plan of operations for the invasion of France, drawn up in 1814:—"In a war with France the problem consists in beating the French Army first of all, and, throwing the *débris* behind the Loire, to take Paris." [1] Von Schlichting wrote a few years ago:—"This plan of Clausewitz succeeded in 1870; Paris is, in fact, the head and heart of France."

It would not be sufficient merely to indicate the objective—the enemy. It is more than ever indispensable, with the enormous effectives of to-day, that everyone should have clearly fixed in his mind the object the strategist is pursuing, so that even in battle the initiative of all develops conformably with the intentions of the chief, who conceived the manœuvre. Moreover, as Jomini justly remarks in his "Strategy and Tactics," combinations reduce

[1] The project of operations was the same in 1914.

themselves to three: the principal effort can be made against either the centre, the right, or the left of the enemy. But it is necessary that everyone, from the private soldier up to the commander of an army, should be clearly fixed in his mind.

The strategist should not only see the battle, he should look beyond that. If one is victorious, evidently one will pursue the enemy, who will probably retire in the direction which he desires to cover, and which will probably be that which the victorious strategist would have chosen.

It is then postulated that the pursuers should know this direction, so as not to launch themselves in false manœuvres.

It might be objected, supporting the objection on the well-known aphorism of Napoleon, "one engages everywhere and then one sees," that it is on the field of battle that the Commander-in-Chief must choose the zone where he will deliver the *"coup de marteau,"* and that to determine it, before taking contact, would take the character of a preconceived idea. This aphorism could be well justified on the battle-fields of the commencement of the 19th Century; at this epoch, the Commander-in-Chief could see, or see with his telescope, the terrain where he was fighting, and owing to the smallness of the field of battle could bring fresh troops to bear on a given point, where they could arrive in sufficient time to strike a decisive blow.

With the extended fronts of battle-fields of to-day this is no longer possible. The strategist can be kept

au courant with the different incidents developing on the field of battle by means of the telegraph and the telephone, etc., but, if he has to shift the army charged with the principal effort, there are great chances that it will arrive too late and strike into space.

The decisive victory having been gained, it should be put to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit; followed by a march on the enemy's capital to take possession of it.

B. The Principle of Economy of Force.

May be described as the concentrating of every man to fight, dispensing with no one and avoiding dissemination and useless detachments. Simultaneous effort accompanies Economy of Force. The French define this principle as concentrating your maximum mass against the principal objective, devoting the minimum to secondary operations. Napoleon violated this principle, through which he gained his great victories, in 1813—with the result of Leipzig—and again in 1815 at Waterloo, when he detached Grouchy with 40,000 men out of a total of 100,000, and was crushed for ever. To violate this principle means disaster. History proves that whenever the army or armies of a power violate the principle of Economy of Force they are beaten. Notable examples in the wars of the 19th and 20th Centuries have been: Austrians in 1796, Austrians in 1805 (Mack at Ulm), and in 1866 (when they detached 80,000 men into Italy), Prussians in 1806, Napoleon

in 1813 and 1815 and by keeping armies in Spain from 1811-1812, the French in 1870, the Russians in 1904 in Manchuria, and the Japanese by detaching Nogi and the 3rd Army of 150,000 men to besiege Port Arthur. Luckily for them Stoessel did not do his duty, so Nogi was able to rejoin the bulk of the Japanese forces just before Mukden. The Balkan Allies, instead of uniting their mass against the principal objective—the bulk of the Turkish forces in the field—which they could have easily crushed and then occupied Constantinople, each pursued their own selfish objectives, with the usual results.

C. Principle of the Mass.

If one studies the campaigns of Napoleon and Frederick, their secret of war is at once apparent. On every occasion they throw their Principal Mass on the enemy's weakest point, which in Strategy is, generally speaking, his line of communications, and in higher Tactics is that flank which lies nearest his natural line of retreat, i.e., his line of communications.

This principle and that of Economy of Force won all Napoleon's great battles and campaigns. Jomini tells us that the fundamental principle of all combinations consists in operating with the greatest mass of your forces, and with simultaneous effort on the decisive point, which should be the enemy's weakest point, either one of his flanks or the centre. Napoleon told Massèna, when he ordered the latter to proceed to Portugal in 1810, to "attack the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers."

In other words, Seek the weak point of your enemy and act on that point with your Mass. An example is Ulm, where the Austrians had detached Mack and thus allowed Napoleon to envelop both flanks.

Ratisbon and Austerlitz are the only two examples of Napoleon finding the enemy's centre to be his weakest point. Eylau, Friedland, Jena, Wagram, Bautzen and Ligny are notable examples of the enemy's weak point being the flank, and Gravelotte, Koeniggrätz, and Mukden are also examples of the flank being enveloped or turned. Napoleon gives twenty-seven examples of the flank being the enemy's weakest point as against two examples of the centre.

The principles of the Mass and of Economy of Force should go together, as they are in reality one principle.

D. The Principle of the Strategic Offensive.

"The strategic offensive alone conducts to victory." (Napoleon.)

"To make war is to attack." (Frederick.)

The case of a weak power like Switzerland or Denmark against Germany obviously would not count in this principle, which applies to powers with sensibly equal forces.

That the strategic offensive alone conducts to victory is proved by the wars of 1796, 1800, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1866, 1870, the war in Manchuria and the late European War. Victory will always fall to the general (strategist or tactician) who attacks with all his forces united; covered in all directions; acting

without delay, and striking the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible mass.

In the war of to-day, the strategic offensive is not only advantageous, it is indispensable. The strategist who, directly he has concentrated his masses (principle of Economy of Force), will then deliberately move forward in the general direction of the bulk of the hostile forces in the field, and will operate with the principal and secondary mass against that point (flank or centre) which true strategic principles demand, will have the greatest chance of success, provided he has sufficient knowledge of the whereabouts of the enemy. This information should be supplied to him by his Intelligence Department, espionage before and after declaration of war, his strategic cavalry, and by aerial reconnaissance.

The Russo-Japanese War is particularly instructive and interesting on this point. Kuropatkin thought that he could not advance and deliver battle until he was accurately informed as to the enemy's strength and positions. He did not get it; he waited inactive, and was beaten in consequence.

The war in Manchuria showed that the strategist cannot wait for information before taking the offensive. As soon as he has formed his plan and has concentrated everyone, he should have only one idea: to march straight on his objective (the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field) with all his forces united. If espionage, cavalry, aeroplanes, assist him with information on the road so much the better. He should not move forward until he has concentrated all

his forces, or otherwise he will violate the principle of Economy of Force. It does not matter if the enemy advances a few hours or days before him; he is not going to allow the enemy to impose his will on him as regards the choice of a point of attack.[2]

E. The Principle of Rapidity or Economy of Direction.

The shortest and most judicious road to the desired goal—the bulk of the hostile forces in the field.

"Movement is the law of strategy." (Marshal Foch.) Act quickly and without delay. 1796, 1800, 1805, 1806, are Napoleon's most brilliant examples of this principle, and those which had the greatest effect on the results of the battles. From 1807 onwards he loses his great rapidity, and in consequence his battles become only half successful. He showed us the true Bonaparte in this respect in 1814, but then it was too late; his enemies had become too numerous.

The move of his army to Belgium in 1815 is a great example of this principle. Both the Japanese and Russians showed a singular want of appreciation of this Napoleonic principle.

F. The Principle of Security.

Keeping one's liberty of action and manœuvre by means of strategic cavalry supported by mixed detachments—armies of the flank or flank guards, etc. —is a great means by which to impose your will on the enemy and not submit to his.

Examples are furnished by Napoleon, the founder

[2] This is the lesson of the late war also.

of modern strategy, in almost all the campaigns he directed. In 1796, the war in Italy, the first conditions to make his manœuvres based on his interior lines succeed were to assure complete liberty of action to his little army. Then we see him equally faithful to the principle of Economy of Force, uniting all his disposable divisions and moving in succession against the armies of the enemy, who had violated that principle by dissemination.

Each time he marched against one of these disseminated fractions of the enemy, he took care to cover himself in all dangerous directions with the minimum force he could spare. In this way he was able to strike a blow without fear of interruption. He added the principle of rapidity. One can say that from a strategic point of view the campaign of 1796 will remain a model type *par excellence*. Bonaparte overdid the principles of security in 1800, and was nearly defeated at Marengo in consequence.

In 1806 he launched a strategic advanced guard in the shape of a whole army corps in the front of his army so as to obtain liberty of action. All his campaigns show that strategic security was always one of his first preoccupations. In 1866 both Prussians and Austrians neglected the principle, with the result that at Koeniggrätz, Benedek fought a battle which responded in no way to his original intentions, and Moltke engaged a part only of his forces against the principal mass of the Austrians without being sure of the co-operation of the other part. In 1870 no strategic principles were carried out by the French

Generals, nor did Moltke show any pronounced application of the principle of security. The Japanese General Staff on the other hand showed that they thoroughly understood it in the war in Manchuria.

The doctrine of the German Staff in Strategy is based on the Napoleonic fundamental principles:—

A. 1. The first object is the enemy's army; and the aim to destroy it.

2. With this view to march against it with several groups of columns, preceded by a numerous cavalry, charged with the duty of discovering where the principal mass of the enemy is.

3. To adopt a front march proportioned to the distance to which the army is reconnoitred in front, in such a way as to enable the army to concentrate in one or two days to fight.

4. The principal mass of the enemy once being found, groups of collateral columns will be converged on it in such a manner as to attack it simultaneously in front and flank, and to cut its principal line of food and supplies.

5. Decisive victory having been gained, to put it to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit; then to march on the enemy's capital to take possession of it.

6. To cover the two flanks of the line of communications with the mother country by mobile armies, and to reduce troublesome fortresses.

B. From the tactical point of view:—

7. In tactical marches, in lines of divisional columns, to keep the artillery near the head of columns, and the munitions behind the combatant troops. To explore the front and flanks with cavalry. To utilise cyclists for the communications in rear.

8. Service of Security: Instead of contenting oneself with observation on the spot, to send out successively detachments and patrols to discover and seek the enemy, and to watch the flanks to a distance.

9. In an offensive combat, to proceed at first by a minute reconnaissance of the dispositions of the defender, and to ascertain where his two flanks rest. To place the mass in such a manner as to attack the front and flank of the enemy's position—always to hold in front and envelop a flank. To dissimulate the march of approach as long as possible by the aid of cover and depressions of the terrain. In acting with superior forces against the wing of the defender, to contain his front at the same time by a numerous artillery.

10. In defensive combat, to support the flanks by obstacles or localities; if not, to dispose echelons in succession behind the flanks. To send the cavalry or mixed detachments to seek out the attacker in order to ascertain from what direction he is approaching. To

> dispose the general reserve on the side of a wing, well masked, so that it can make a counter attack at the decisive moment. To bring up the ammunition behind the line of combat. To create field works on the front and the flanks, masking them with care. To open up roads and telegraph lines in rear of the front.

The above doctrine, laid down by Moltke, is entirely taken from the fundamental principles of Napoleon, indicated in his military correspondence during his various campaigns.

The above principles of Napoleon are of even more importance to-day, given the size of the national groups of armies put into the field in the great war just concluded. In this connection, Colonel Repington, in the "Times" of December 28th, 1909, wrote that "we must still remember that the Napoleonic manner of conducting war remains the fountain-head of military wisdom, and that latter inspirations must be in themselves inexplicable to us unless we drink at the same source whence most of these inspirations are derived."

"All the great captains of antiquity and those who have later marched in their footsteps have only done great deeds by conforming to the principles. My greatest successes have been attributed to luck, and my reverses to my faults, but if I wrote my campaigns one would be very astonished to see that in

every case I exercised my faculties in order to conform to the principles of war." (Napoleon's conversation at St. Helena, 16th November, 1816.)

Napoleon also said that in war "one must conform as much as possible with the great principles. It is luck which does the rest."

The great Archduke Charles, the formidable opponent of Napoleon at the battles of Aspern and Wagram in 1809, wrote as follows:—"After having written the history of thirty campaigns and assisted personally in twelve of the most celebrated, I can affirm that I have not found a single example where the principles well applied have not gained the victory."

In Marshal Foch's book, "Les Principes de la Guerre," we find: "The art of war, like all other arts, has its theory, its principles; or it would not be an art." Quite lately Marshal Foch in an interview reported in the "Daily Mail" said:—

"The principles of war are always the same. It matters nothing whether your soldier is on his feet in the open, or shut up inside a tank. The principles on which he must fight are unalterable. The development of the art of war is like that of architecture. The materials you use for your buildings may change. They may be wood, stone, steel. But the static principles on which your house must be built are permanent."

As regards the strategic lessons of this war, judged from the standpoint of the great principles, we find,

regardless of the lessons of history, governments violating the great principle of Economy of Force with the usual result.

Napoleon, who, as we have said, won all his victories by the observance of the principle of Economy of Force, did in 1813 allow political reasons and vanity to interfere with his adhesion to it, inasmuch as he locked up 200,000 veteran troops in Spain, a secondary theatre, when he was struggling for existence with the armies of Prussia, Russia and Austria in his principal theatre, viz., Germany. What was the result? He was defeated at Leipzig and kicked across the Rhine. Had he had those 200,000 troops in Spain present at Leipzig, he must have won a victory, for he nearly won Leipzig, greatly out numbered though he was, and with inferior troops.

This lesson was lost on the French Government in 1870, however. They gave us then an example of the violation of Economy of Force perhaps unequalled in history. The regular army was beaten in detail in Alsace and Lorraine; an army of reservists was then formed and wiped out at Sedan; an army of 700,000 Territorials, National Guard, Mobiles, etc., was then raised, and with it the struggle was maintained for six months. Marshal Foch, in his "Conduite de la Guerre," asks: What would these three armies *united* at the commencement of the war have done? The result, he says, would have been that at least France would have retained Alsace Lorraine. All these forces should have been united at the same instant, and, if possible, at the same point, on the prin-

ciple of Economy of Force. It was with this example in my mind that I gave my opinion when called on officially to do so in 1913, that our Territorial system, as a preparation for war—whereby the Territorial Force was not to be permanently embodied and framed for war, until it actually broke out—was a direct violation of the principle of Economy of Force, and therefore a system of which even Bonaparte would have despaired. That we won the war is no argument against this contention. We had the armies of France to hold the field till we were ready with our hastily improvised armies; and then America came in. Would the retreat to the Marne have been necessary had our Territorial Force been ready when war broke out? I am inclined to think that the war would have been finished in 1914, had our regular and Territorial forces taken the field *instantly* side by side with the French armies, regular and Territorial.

The principle of Economy of Force has been briefly described above as uniting every unit in your hand to fight, and avoiding all fatal disseminations and useless detachments—i.e., all detachments not absolutely necessary, which cannot be united to the principal mass of your forces for the decisive battle, or which do not detain, detach, or hold an equal or larger detachment of the enemy. It is best interpreted, I think, as the judicious grouping of your forces for the purpose of carrying out the first principle; that is to say, strategically speaking, you allot your Principal Mass to your principal theatre of the war, in which you are to gain the decision, and a mini-

mum force to your secondary or defensive theatre, or theatres.

Tactically speaking, the principle of Economy of Force is that the enemy must be engaged in sufficient strength by a minimum force to pin him to his ground in what is called your "secondary field," whilst you allot your principal mass, in the greatest possible strength, to your principal or offensive field, in order to overwhelm the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers.

A propos detachments, with regard to this principle:

If it be proved that a detachment is absolutely necessary, then, having cut it down to a bedrock minimum, sufficient to carry out its purpose, you should arrange that it can be drawn in and united with your principal mass, or main force, for the battle; or else it must be so arranged that this detachment holds in check a greater number of the enemy than itself, preventing it in this way from joining in the main battle.

The principles of Economy of Force and of the Mass are the most important of all the principles established by Napoleon; and to their application he owed his great victories over the armies of the other continental powers, whose generals were utterly ignorant of them. His campaign in Italy in 1796 is taken as a model illustration of this principle of the art of war. In this campaign the Austrian forces were disseminated in packets all over the map of northern Italy, and Bonaparte crushed these forces

in succession. By means of rapid forward offensive marches he would take up a central position between two of these separated armies, and, containing one of them with a minimum force, would with his Principal Mass overwhelm the other separated fraction of the enemy.

Clausewitz wrote of the principle of Economy of Force that: "The first and most important of the rules which impose themselves on a general-in-chief is to keep his forces united. He must only detach from the general mass of his troops that which is strictly indispensable for the satisfaction of an urgent necessity."

Napoleon constantly refers to this principle throughout his military correspondence, in his rebukes and in his advice to his generals, and more especially to Prince Eugène or King Joseph, when commanding forces in a secondary theatre of the war. "Why have you not united your forces?" And again he writes in 1808:—"The cordon system is good against smugglers and for postal arrangements, but it has never yet succeeded in war. . . . Is your army commanded by postal inspectors?"

Unmindful of her history, in 1866 Austria repeated the violation of the principle of Economy of Force. For, in spite of the protests of Marshal Benedek, the Commander-in-Chief in the field, 80,000 men were detached from his main army to watch the Italian frontier, although there was no danger of Italy coming into the war at that moment. The result was speedy; it was Koeniggrätz (or Sadowa), and Aus-

tria in the dust in seven days. Had those 80,000 men been at the battle, the Austrians must have won, for Moltke at one time was so near defeat as actually to issue orders for the retreat! And the history of modern Europe would have been different.

And, finally, as regards Economy of Force: there should, of course, be one plan or project of operations for both the principal theatre and the secondary theatre or theatres of a war.

The expeditions to Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, and Palestine will, doubtless, in history be described as violations of the principle of Economy of Force. What were Baghdad or Jerusalem to us? They were secondary objectives—very secondary compared with the need of winning in the principal theatre of France. But, at the same time, the truth remains that, owing to the Gallipoli expedition, the Turkish losses were so great in that operation that it is no exaggeration to say that their forces were emasculated, and had no real strength left vigorously to counter-attack our advances in the secondary theatres of Mesopotamia or Palestine.

Whilst on the subject of Economy of Force, it is not out of place to note the excellent strategy of our Navy throughout this war. Never has there been a better example of how the principle of Economy of Force should be observed. This is apparent when one examines the judicious distribution of the naval forces prior to the war. In the principal theatre—the North Sea—was the principal mass of our fighting ships. In the secondary theatres—the Pacific,

Indian and Atlantic Oceans, etc.—we had minimum forces cut down to bedrock requirements.

The principle of Rapidity, or Economy of direction, was illustrated to the highest degree by the German Great General Staff in 1914 in the commencement of the war; but the German offensive reached its culminating point in 1914 at the Battle of the Marne, in which they were beaten. The German Great General Staff then wisely decided to dig in and hold on to what they had gained; they assumed a defensive *rôle* in order to tire out the Allies and conclude an advantageous peace.

Thus the Napoleonic war of manœuvre or movement was rendered practically impossible, after the Battle of the Marne, and a "war of positions," recalling the wars of the 18th Century, a war of entrenchments, more suited to a secondary theatre, became the order of the day. This lasted with few variations until the great German offensive in March, 1918, changed the war of positions back again into a war of movement and manœuvre. This was soon cut short by the armistice. On the other hand, the operations in the secondary theatres of the war, such as Palestine and Mesopotamia, were wars of manœuvre and movement.

The slow progress of attack in a war of positions, where the defender utilises a succession of defended lines or position, exhausts the attacker; in consequence you have indecisive battles. The defence in a war of positions permits of hastily improvised troops maintaining themselves in trenches and under

cover, whereas in a war of manœuvre and movement in the open field they would be quickly defeated by better trained troops. Moreover, an offensive war of manœuvre and movement requires the generals engaged to be experienced and skilled in manœuvre, and the troops more highly trained, as regards marching power and endurance, suppleness in manœuvre and higher discipline.

Rapidity in war depends entirely upon the experience of the commander and his staff, and—be it repeated—an excellent quality of troops. For example, Wellington, at the commencement of his campaign in Portugal, had a staff who were novices, his artillery was ridiculously weak in proportion to the infantry and scantily horsed, transport did not exist, but had to be hired from the peasantry. It will be seen, as regards my operations in Mesopotamia, that I was always handicapped by want of transport, and so compelled to make long waits between each advance forward. Not to mention my utterly inadequate force as regards the numbers required for an offensive.

As regards the Principle of the offensive conducting alone to victory.

Napoleon said: "Only adopt the defensive when it is impossible for you to do otherwise. If you are reduced to this regrettable extremity, whether it be to gain time or to unite your forces and means, or to entice or draw the enemy away from his base of operations (or from impregnable positions), an ulterior offensive must be the object of your action."

A great preponderance of numbers is, of course, necessary for the strategic offensive. This, together with political aspirations and ambition, decided the German Great General Staff to assume the strategic offensive in the Western, or principal theatre in the late war. In addition, they had the more highly trained and experienced generals and staff and the higher trained and disciplined troops—with great marching powers—for the manœuvring offensive on a great scale. But the strategic offensive also demands a constant stream of reinforcements following up the first and second waves in the shape of men, munitions and supplies, and the railways, roads, and communications generally must never be empty. The German Great General Staff miscalculated in 1914 the numbers requisite to carry through the offensive at high water level till the end, just as in the bombardment of a fortress one must constantly increase the intensity of the bombardment; if you stop from want of munitions, all your previous work is thrown away. Napoleon in 1812 and 1813; Gustavus Adolphus; Charles XII of Sweden; Frederick the Great, and Hannibal—all failed from miscalculation as to the numbers required to keep up the offensive at high water level, and to allow for the great wastage of armies on the offensive, entailed by a constant effort which must be maintained.

Add to the above the constantly increasing distance from home and main sources of supply, while railways in a hostile country are not to be reckoned on. And the dissemination of necessary detachments

to be made as the advance continues; troops must be detached to guard the line of communications, for security, covering services for the flanks, etc.

Thus in the strategical offensive you reach a culminating point, at which the original superiority of the offensive is by a natural weakening process brought down so low as to make victory doubtful.

The German Great General Staff reached their culminating point at the Battle of the Marne in 1914, and similarly after Verdun in 1916. In both cases the Germans, having failed in their blow, dug in and hung on while at the same time they endeavoured to bring about peace by tiring out the enemy. Joffre and Haig were compelled by circumstances to adopt the defensive and offensive, or the premeditated adjournment of the decisive act, which in the opinion of Clausewitz is perhaps the stronger of the two forms of war. Moltke, too, was of this opinion after the war of 1870:—"It is true that in 1870 we attacked and captured the strongest positions, but at the price of what sacrifices? If, after repulsing many attacks of the enemy, we pass to the attack, this procedure appears to me the more preferable."

This is the principle also on which a secondary theatre should be held, until such time as the Principal Mass of your forces in the principal theatre is delivering the decisive attack. In this connection, Wellington's strategy in Spain, a secondary theatre of the war in Europe in 1813, is a good example; he took the offensive when the Allies in the principal theatre in Germany were taking the offensive against Napoleon.

Napoleon, in his application of the two great principles of Economy of Force and the Mass in strategy, and in higher tactics, makes no difference in the offensive or defensive. With him there is no question of offensive or defensive, the word he uses is initiative; either one takes the initiative or one does not, and I have always thought that the word initiative should take the place of offensive or defensive.

A Commander-in-Chief may lose the initiative by a delay in strategic concentration, or the enemy may have concentrated or strategically grouped their armies with greater rapidity. In the case of the Allies in 1914, one power, England, was not ready, and thus the French Generalissimo was compelled to defend himself in whatever terrain came to hand.

However, in spite of the many advantages claimed by many writers for the strategic defensive, it is impossible to divorce from it a sense of weakness, which often limits all efforts to the passive defensive. No decisive result can be attained by the defensive pure and simple. The utmost which can be obtained by the strategical defensive is a peace which the enemy grants because he is worn out. Frederick the Great gained his peace in this way at the end of the Seven Years' War; but he held on to Silesia. In the same way, in the late war, Hindenburg and Ludendorff intended to hold on to Belgium, copying Frederick the Great in Silesia. A great political and military disadvantage entailed by the strategic defensive is the loss of *moral* among the population at home in having to abandon territory at the commencement. Com-

pare the population in the north of France in the late war.

No decisive victory can be gained by the strategic defensive, all that can be attained is to avoid defeats; the highest results, the destruction of the enemy and the taking of his country, can only be attained by the combination of the strategical and tactical offensives.

Every systematic defence must have its turning point, when you must assume the offensive if you intend to win the war. The Battle of the Marne should have been the turning point for the Anglo-French armies in 1914, and in time I suppose we shall be told why it was not. The Turks attempted to take the Battle of Ctesiphon as a turning point in their defence of Mesopotamia, but I held up their counter-offensive by my five months' defence of Kut, after which lapse of time all chances of driving us out of Mesopotamia were gone. A strategic flanking position is indicated as a good opportunity for the turning point in a strategic defence, e.g., Foch's dispositions before assuming the offensive after the offensive of the Germans was held up in March, 1918. In the beginning of 1918 the German Great General Staff took the Battle of Cambrai as their turning point to change to the offensive after a defensive of nearly two years.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE NAPOLEONIC PRINCIPLES BY MOLTKE, whose doctrine was closely followed by the German Great General Staff.

Moltke modelled his system in strategy and higher tactics on that of Napoleon.

When on the offensive two systems of Strategic Manœuvre are used:—

(*a*) The manœuvre against the enemy's flank and rear;

(*b*) The manœuvre against the centre.

In like manner the German Great General Staff used two systems in higher tactics for an offensive battle:—

(*a*) The turning manœuvre with the Principal Mass against the enemy's flank and rear;

(*b*) The attack against the centre.

In both cases (*a*) is the favourite manœuvre, as it was with Napoleon. We have twenty-seven examples in Napoleon's battles of (*a*) type, against only two of (*b*) type.

That is to say, the favourite system consists in the combination of a turning movement and attack on the flank and rear of the enemy by the secondary mass (or "the offensive wing of manœuvre," as Moltke called it), and an attack by the Principal Mass (or "Centre," as Moltke called it) against that wing which has been turned. Like Napoleon, Moltke selected as the weakest point of the enemy, on which to apply his Principal Mass, that flank and wing which lay nearest his natural line of communications.

To describe the system more intimately: Moltke, following Napoleon closely, delivered a turning attack with his secondary mass against that flank of the enemy which lay nearest his natural line of retreat. He supported this enveloping or turning attack by

a principal attack with his Principal Mass against the same wing of the enemy which had been turned or enveloped.

That wing of the enemy which lies furthest from the enemy's natural line of retreat, and has not been enveloped or turned, he contained by a holding attack or Minimum Force, which Moltke called his "defensive wing," and gave, following Napoleon, a clearly defensive character to this zone of the battlefield. This minimum force, in order to hold the enemy and induce him to use up his reserves, etc., utilises obstacles of the terrain, such as water-courses, forests, etc., and field fortification, defence of localities, villages, etc.

The preparatory attack is carried out by this minimum force supported by the bulk of the artillery and the engineers, and it is during this preparatory attack that the secondary mass, or turning or enveloping attack, is drawn round like a net on to the extreme flank—and the rear of that flank—of the enemy which lies nearest his natural line of retreat. The bulk of the cavalry co-operates with this turning attack, moving on its exterior flank. The Principal Mass is launched against the wing of the enemy doomed to destruction, as soon as it is seen that the turning attack by the secondary mass is taking effect.

The attack of the Principal Mass is the signal for the "whole to advance," and the hammer blow of the Principal Mass and secondary mass on one wing of the enemy should automatically smash it up.

The minimum force turns its holding attack into

a decisive one as soon as the principal or decisive attack is delivered by the Principal Mass, and the wing of the enemy it is engaged with will generally flee when it is understood that its broken wing is being crushed.

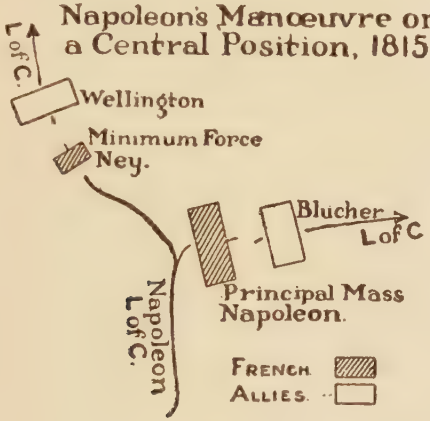
Napoleon realised, like his imitators Moltke and the German Great General Staff, that the great increase of fire effect in modern wars renders penetration of the centre more and more difficult, and gives always greater importance to the enveloping or turning form of attack. We should always resort to the turning or enveloping manœuvre, both in strategy and in tactics, when circumstances and room for manœuvre permit of such action. "Talent in a commander-in-chief consists in containing the front of an enemy with a part of his forces, whilst he uses his principal effort against the enemy's flank." This was the doctrine of Willisen, of Moltke, and of the German Great General Staff. The great strategic turning manœuvre of the German Great General Staff in 1914 is simply a copy of the manœuvres of Napoleon in 1805 and 1806—the Austerlitz and Jena campaigns—and on approximately the same extent of strategic front. This is at once apparent if the trouble be taken to compare the campaigns.

There was, of course, little space for manœuvre in the Western theatre in the late war, owing to the space taken up by the great groups of national armies, after the preliminary war of manœuvre in 1914. But there were ample spaces for manœuvre and examples of the war of manœuvre in such second-

ary theatres of the war as Russia, Rumania, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. Owing to the enormous numbers in the field in France, Hindenburg and Foch had to develop the strategic Turning or Enveloping Manœuvre from an initial strategical attack on a wing. Hindenburg and Ludendorff gave us an example of this in March, 1918, when they copied the manœuvre of Moltke in 1870.

In the beginning of that war the French right wing (MacMahon) stood isolated in Alsace; the other French wing (Bazaine) was in Lorraine. Moltke arranged first to destroy the right wing, MacMahon, by means of an envelopment by his Principal Mass, in the meantime containing Bazaine by means of his minimum force. After destroying MacMahon, Moltke would swing round his Principal Mass to envelop Bazaine, cutting him off from his line of communications with Paris and driving him northward. If you represent MacMahon's army by the group of British armies, and Bazaine by the French group of armies, you would have the example of Hindenburg's strategical attack on a wing in March, 1918. Hindenburg threw the Principal Mass of his armies on to the British, whilst he contained the French with his secondary group (or minimum force). Had he been successful in destroying the British, he would have swung round his Principal Mass, turning the French armies, and falling on to their flank and rear. At the same time his minimum force, engaged in containing the French, would have assumed the offensive also. The manœuvre failed because of the tenacity

of the British soldiers, who, though driven back, still hung together and were not routed; and again because of the fatal dissemination of a group of German armies in Russia. If we examine the example of Napoleon's strategic penetration in 1815, when he attacked Blücher with his principal mass whilst he contained Wellington with his minimum force, we can see where the Germans got their idea of this manœuvre from.

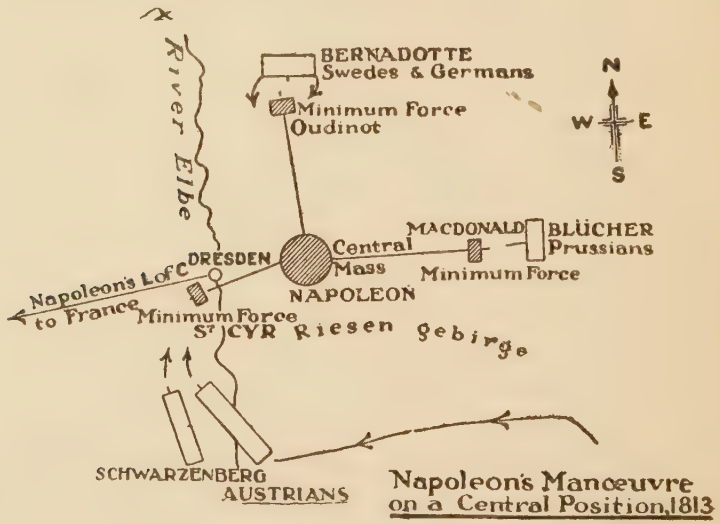


PLAN NO. I

This was what Napoleon called his Manœuvre on a Central Position or on Central Lines; what some other writers call the Manœuvre on Interior Lines. He got into a central position by means of a sudden, rapid and secret march; then, containing one of the hostile armies with a minimum force, he threw his Principal Mass on the other hostile army, in order to destroy it. Having accomplished this, he ran with

his Principal Mass to unite it with his minimum force, which was engaged in containing and holding back the other hostile army, to deliver the hammer blow. His 1796 and 1814 campaigns, when he was compelled by inferiority of numbers to fight on the defensive-offensive, are brilliant examples of this manœuvre and the application of the Principle of the Mass.

If he were tied, so to speak, to some place which he felt bound to guarantee against hostile enterprise, such as Dresden in 1813, Paris in 1814, or Mantua in 1796, he made that place his centre of operations for his manœuvre on a Central Position.



PLAN NO. II

In all cases the object and the application of the Principle of the Mass is the same as when you are

on the offensive. By uniting your Principal Mass with one of your minimum forces, engaged in containing the enemy, you endeavour to destroy one of the separated fractions of the enemy. During this operation, the other fraction of the hostile force must be contained by a minimum force of sufficient strength for that purpose, entrenched on the defensive. For example, in Napoleon's 1813 campaign, Blücher attacked Macdonald, whose minimum force was entrenched, as is required of a minimum force. Napoleon ran with his Principal Mass to unite himself with Macdonald and crush Blücher. In the meantime, Oudinot was being pressed, and called for help. After settling Blücher, Napoleon moved to the assistance of Oudinot with his Principal Mass.

The distances between the Principal Mass and the minimum forces are on principle not more than two or three short marches.

As regards the distribution or grouping of your forces for the Manœuvre on the Central Position: It is simply a question of economy of force; you economise the power expended on your minimum force in order to increase that of your Principal Mass, which has to deal the hammer blow.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff manœuvred the German armies on a Central Position in 1917 and 1918, following the strategy of Napoleon in 1813. They failed, as I have shown above, for the same reason that Napoleon failed in his manœuvre on a Central Position in 1813, because the disparity of numbers between the opposing forces was too great. Simi-

larly, the German Great General Staff violated the principle of Economy of Force by sending a group of armies into Russia, a secondary theatre, when it was not necessary, just as Napoleon retained 200,000 troops in Spain, a secondary theatre, in 1813.

I will conclude this chapter with an extract from a lecture of mine given in 1913:—

"The art of war, like all other arts, has its theory and its principles, and is the special study of a lifetime. 'Good theories founded on real principles, justified by facts, and strengthened by the lessons of history, are in our opinion the real school of high command' (Jomini).

"Never have the great fundamental principles of war established by Napoleon, the founder of modern strategy and the fountain of all military knowledge to-day, stood out so prominently or been of more value, given the vast size of armies in the 20th Century, when war is no longer made by armies but by groups of armies. Our generals and field officers of to-day should be profound students of strategy and military history, and they should have a deep knowledge of the principles of Napoleon. In the same way Moltke trained the German General Staff before 1866 and 1870. Taught by the disasters of 1870, where the French generals, innocent of all study, and ignorant of the great Napoleonic principles, put into practice against them by Moltke, suffered cruel punishment, the French General Staff insists on this study. Marshal Bazaine is an example

of a man ignorant of the great principles of war. He fell immediately beneath the responsibility of the command of an army; and in his downfall dragged the honour of France. One has simply to read his operation orders to detect his utter ignorance of the art of war.

"Happily for France, the military writers Generals Langlois and Bonnal, Maillard, Foch, etc., preached the necessity of the Napoleonic doctrine, showing that they should not copy their conquerors, but should seek the same fountain of knowledge —Napoleon—as their victors had done. Moltke boasted in 1870 that he was the only man in Europe at that epoch who understood Napoleon. In training officers for high command, we should keep before us the requirements of the modern general. He should be a man of energy, capacity, intelligence, a man of the world, calm and collected under all circumstances. In addition to the above qualities of character, not only the Commander-in-Chief of the group of armies, but his army commanders, army corps and divisional commanders, will have great resolutions to take, in which a false decision may conduct many thousands of souls to a useless death. They must then have a profound knowledge of the art of war; they must be students working continuously at the higher questions of war, embraced by strategy and higher tactics, so as to keep abreast of modern requirements, and they should have a sound knowledge of military history.

"In the 19th Century, it was sufficient to choose

a man as Commander-in-Chief with experience of war and bold in combat, and to give him, as in the case of Marshal Blücher in 1813, 1814, 1815, a staff officer of high capacity and of frank and loyal character of the type of Gneisenau and Muffling.

"But that which was true of the 19th Century is not of the 20th. In the 19th Century the science of war was much simpler than now. It was possible in the beginning, and even in the middle, of the last century for a Commander-in-Chief possessing character and coolness and assisted by a good chief of the staff to command an army with credit.

"But to-day he no longer commands an army only, he directs a group of armies on a strategic front of possibly one or two hundred miles in extent; and we cannot conceive an ignorant man in the hands of his staff being able to direct under such conditions for a single moment.

"An inspector of Prussian military schools, General Von Pencker, wrote a few years back: 'When a general has the knowledge that he is enlightened by means of the instruction he has acquired, he will be able to sum up the situation in extraordinary circumstances; his character grows stronger, he acquires facility in giving clear and rapid solutions and putting them into vigorous execution. On the other hand, every man who is conscious of his ignorance is always undecided and hesitating, perplexed and ready to be demoralised.'

"Knowledge then is a necessary condition. It gives convictions a doctrine, confidence, faculty of

enlightened decision; it creates power of action, makes men of action, develops character. To make a good strategist, common sense, a just mind, and, above all, a developed and deep knowledge of tactics are required. Without this fundamental knowledge of tactics one would arrive at conceptions which would in practice lead to disaster. It is for this reason that practical soldiers should not undertake the question of strategy until they are in the second period of their career.

"'If a good theory, founded on true principles, justified by facts and justified by history, will not invariably make great men—for great men make themselves when favoured by circumstances — it makes at least chiefs who are sufficiently able to be perfectly in their place in the second rank under the orders of great generals' (Jomini).

"Moltke tells us how to teach judgment and decision at the *Ecole de guerre.* He points out that the object in imparting military knowledge is to enable the student to use the theory taught him by the professor. To accomplish this, it is not sufficient to listen always—he must carry out exercises in which the principles must be applied. General Pencker prescribes that the students should put their theoretical knowledge to practical application, that officers under instruction should be made to act by themselves. The school of Moltke gave practical proof of the value of the instruction they had received in the 1866 campaign, where the commanders of the advanced guards, who had been recently at the *Ecole de guerre,*

handled them with striking ease and vigour of execution.

"The practical application of principles to cases drawn from history is the best training for experience in the art of commanding. It should be remembered that the brilliant army, army corps, and divisional commanders trained by Moltke for the 1866 and 1870 campaigns had none of them ever seen a shot fired in anger; the French generals they made such an example of had practically all of them several campaigns, civilised and uncivilised, to their credit, but they were ignorant of all study of the great principles of Napoleon. This has all changed to-day, when the French General Staff are fanatics on the question of the great Napoleonic Principles, as are also the Russians and the Japanese."

PART I

KURNA

MESOPOTAMIA.
General Map.

CHAPTER II

THE OCCUPATION OF BASRA AND SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

BEFORE starting the account of my own operations in Mesopotamia, I will throw a rapid glance over this secondary theatre of the war, in order to summarise events which happened there before my arrival on the scene.

Early in October, 1914, the 16th Infantry Brigade of the 6th (or Poona) Division was despatched secretly from Bombay, under the command of Brigadier-General Delamain, with orders to demonstrate at the head of the Persian Gulf, to occupy Abbadan Island with the object of protecting the oil works, and, if possible, to occupy the port of Basra. On the 5th November war was declared against Turkey, and the remainder of the 6th Division at Poona, commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Barrett, sailed from Bombay and united with the 16th Brigade, which had been landed on Bahrein Island, famous for its pearl fishery. This brought the strength of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force [1] up to that of one division—roughly 15,000 combatants.

General Barrett, with the 6th Divisional Head-

[1] Also known officially as Indian Expeditionary Force "D."

quarters, arrived in Mesopotamia about the 14th November. Fao, at the mouth of the river and inside the bar, which consisted of a lighthouse and a small blockhouse, was taken, after a few shots, by a company of infantry landed in boats; and the division united at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, the name given to the great river founded by the combined streams of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Thence it could march direct on Basra—which, I believe, had been the original project of the operations, as drawn up at Army Headquarters in India. However, the entire absence of transport with Barrett's force put this plan out of the question.

This was quite in accordance with our national traditions in the direction of oversea expeditions. Up to this great war of 1914-18 (if we except the Crimea, from which no strategic lesson can be learnt, except how not to do anything) the Peninsular War was the only one in which any British army over the strength of an army corps fought on the Continent, and with the Peninsular I include the 1815 campaign, begun in the same way. It will be remembered that Sir Arthur Wellesley landed at Mondego Bay in 1808 with a force similar to that under the command of General Barrett at Basra in 1914, without any transport whatever to enable him to march a yard away from the ships on the coast. Our military history largely consisted—from, and including, the Seven Years' War—of a long story of maritime expeditions, in which a small military force was taken in ships and landed on some island or some coast,

without any transport to enable it to march three miles inland. The force landed would either take up an ignoble position on the water's edge until the approach of the enemy's army induced it to embark again, or it would attack a town and harbour or take a fort, or be repulsed.

In the late war our Principal Theatre was France, since there were the bulk of the hostile forces in the field, which had to be destroyed in order to win the war. It is, therefore, astonishing to read to-day that men in high position in Government—not only civilians, but soldiers also—unmindful of history and the sacred principle of Economy of Force, advocated the action of disseminated force in the shape of the landing of an army or two on the German shores of the Baltic! The German Great General Staff naturally, as in 1870, made ample provision for that by using an army of second-line troops as a *force de couverture,* grouped and acting on the same principle as that of the Manœuvre on a Central Position (see Introduction). Covering a great extent of front—say from Oldenburg to Lübeck or beyond—this army was able instantly to concentrate or to unite by road and rail on any section of the line in eighteen hours.

An army landed from a fleet would naturally be wanting in transport and be greatly under-proportioned in artillery. But Wolfe, in the expedition against Quebec a hundred and fifty years ago, though he had no transport whatever to enable him to march, at least had lighters and flat-bottomed boats, in which to disembark his troops—and Barrett hadn't even

that! It will be seen that the Mesopotamian expedition displays, especially in the way of transport available, all the worst faults of former expeditions and some peculiar to the campaign besides.

The Turkish force was discovered at Sahil, on the right bank of the Shatt-el-Arab, a few miles below Mohammerah. It consisted of the 38th Division—with its Headquarters at Basra—a unit much under strength and composed largely of locally enlisted Arabs, drilled by Turkish officers and instructors on the same principle as our Indian battalions, but certainly not so good as our Indian troops, and indeed more or less unreliable; and of the 23rd Turkish Regiment, which had been sent to Mesopotamia some nine months previously, as a punishment for bad conduct. There were also some cavalry and field artillery. The total force, which was commanded by Colonel Subeh Bey, the Military Governor of the Basra province, comprised perhaps 5,000 men.

The 16th and 18th Infantry Brigades (the 17th not yet having arrived) were disembarked with difficulty down-stream of the Turkish position, which consisted of a line of entrenchments in palm groves on the bank of the river, and delivered a frontal attack, in the course of which the Turks fell back on Basra. The lack of any sort of landing material, such as steam launches, tugs, flat-bottomed boats, barges, collapsible boats, etc., which nowadays can be carried to any extent on ships, and permit a force to land at any selected point in one trip of the boats between transports and shore, rendered the disem-

barkation of Barrett's force a most difficult, tedious and dangerous operation. Several men were drowned in the process, and the gun ammunition was so short that, I was told, artillery could hardly be used in the action. Happily for the force the landing was unopposed.

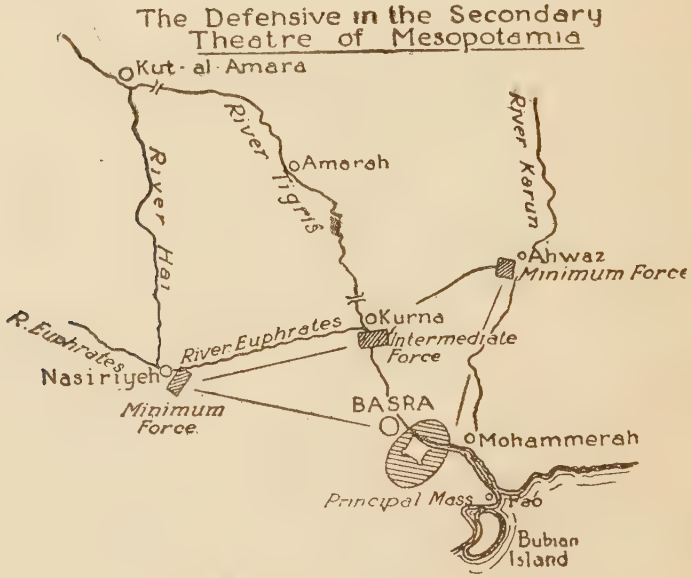
Basra was entered unopposed on 22nd November, after a night march, the ships steaming up the river and picking up *en route* a number of river craft whose skippers had managed to evade the Turkish authorities and slip into the Karun River on the declaration of war. It was thus entirely due to luck and the action of these skippers that the force had any sort of river craft at all, for none had been provided by the Indian authorities. Without these craft, Barrett's force could not have moved a yard beyond Basra.

In accordance with superior instructions, Barrett occupied Kurna, situated at the bifurcation of the Tigris and the old Euphrates, some 35 miles north of Basra, and a most important point.

I have, in the Introduction, described the Manœuvre on a Central Position or the Manœuvre on Interior Lines. I was always of the opinion that as Mesopotamia was a secondary Theatre of the War we should have held Basra and its province on the defensive by a disposition similar to the Manœuvre on a Central Position.

In this idea I should have occupied the towns of Kurna on the Tigris, in the bifurcation of the Tigris and the Euphrates, Nasiriyeh, and Ahwaz on the

Karun River, all of which were avenues of approach for the enemy, with minimum forces strongly entrenched and with ammunition and provisions for six months. The Principal Mass of my forces would have been installed in the vicinity of Basra, in an entrenched camp whose guns menaced that city and port. I have explained that the distance between the Principal, or Central, Mass and minimum forces should not exceed two or three *short* marches; but railway or steamer transport on a navigable river will allow you to extend the distance to two days' steaming or one and a half days' rail.



PLAN NO. III

Kurna is some forty miles up river from Basra—call it one and a quarter days' steaming against the current.

Nasiriyeh is some eighty miles by river from Basra, *viâ* Kurna. The navigation is difficult owing to a shallow lake, and thus an intermediate force at Kurna might be desirable in order to make it possible to throw a reinforcement into Nasiriyeh speedily, before the more slowly moving Principal Mass could arrive from Basra. But as time went on a light railway should have been built to connect Basra direct with Nasiriyeh, and this was done after Kut had fallen.

As I have said above, I should have established a large Reduit, in the shape of an entrenched camp, close to Basra, whence my guns would menace and keep in order the city and port. In this Reduit would be concentrated provisions for a *year* for my whole force, all munitions of war and supplies, artillery and engineer parks, equipment, clothing, hospital equipment and stores, transport, etc., including ammunition for the whole force for the same period. Large grain magazines and mills, etc., would be organised in this Reduit, to which, in case of a check or reverse to our armies in Mesopotamia, we could have retired and defended ourselves for a year, supported by warships. Thus Basra would have been the centre of operations, the Central Place of all defensive arrangements. Whatever happened in the way of a reverse or check, or attack by overwhelming

numbers on any one of the three avenues of approach, I should have manœuvred successfully if, when attacked by superior forces, I succeeded in uniting my troops, ammunition, material, and provisions to last a year in the Reduit or Keep.

If you have no Reduit in a Secondary Theatre, in the event of check or disaster, all your material of war, magazines, ammunition, supplies, clothing, disseminated according to chance, will fall into the hands of the enemy directly he obtains the upper hand in the field. But if a Central Place or Reduit be installed, the enemy is not going to get the upper hand. So long as the Central Place exists, my troops may lose battles, but they can obtain breathing-time in the entrenchments or fortified position of the Central Place, and can again make a bid for victory, or can occupy an enemy three times as numerous as they by standing a siege, thus giving three or four clear months for a relieving army to arrive from overseas. So long as the Central Place were not taken, the fate of the province of Basra could not have been decided, and the great amount of material collected for the defence would not have been lost.

If such a fortified Central Place be installed, confidence is established in the minds of your troops. The soldier no longer feels he is *en l'air* in a hostile country, when at such a distance as was my command at Azizieh or Ctesiphon—some 350 or 390 miles from Basra, with no troops in support behind them. The defences of Basra, all would have known, would ensure security, rest, food, and the honour of the force

—and, in short, in this way I should have secured Mesopotamia at a minimum cost to England, and in absolute security until such time as Government decided that I should take the offensive—preferably when the decisive offensive was assumed in the principal theatre of France—and gave me adequate forces to do so.

General Barrett occupied Kurna; a place of commanding military value on account of its situation at the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates. The 18th Infantry Brigade under General Fry moved against Kurna, and, after some fighting at Mazera on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite Kurna, some of the Turks retreated, whilst a part of the force under Subeh Bey surrendered to General Fry on the 9th December. This was a capture of 1,200 men and 9 guns.

General Fry with the 18th Brigade then entrenched on the right bank of the Tigris about a mile up stream of Kurna. Towards the end of December two battalions of Turks arrived at Sakricha, just north of Bahran, and entrenched, while the marsh Arabs began to harass our troops at Kurna by night-firing.

Up to this time the 6th Division had been short of one brigade. But now the 17th Infantry Brigade, completing the division, arrived from India and went into camp at Kurna.

Brigadier-General Dobbie, commanding the 17th Brigade, carried out a reconnaissance in force towards Sakricha on January 1st, 1915, and fell back

to Kurna, the enemy, of course, telegraphing "a repulse to the British," and being encouraged in consequence. Larger numbers of them soon began to arrive. Another reconnaissance in force was carried out on the 20th January from Mazera on the left bank to examine the enemy's position and report on his strength. The Turks had over 400 casualties, including their new Commander, Suleiman Askeri, who was wounded by our artillery fire, whilst the British loss was practically nil. As, however, our force retired again, the enemy published another victory. This is invariably the case with "a reconnaissance in force." The chief reason for its undesirability is that the action engaged in is without a definite plan, and, as you must retreat, the enemy will claim a victory.

The result of these reconnaissances was a greatly increased activity on the part of the Turks, and the creation by them of a formidable position north of Kurna at Bahran. The initiative had now passed into the hands of the Turks, and the attitude of the British became defensive. To this end an entrenched camp was made at Mazera on the left bank of the Tigris opposite Kurna, of sufficient front and depth for a division; but it was never occupied by more than a brigade. The Turks, however, had no intention of advancing by the Tigris line. Suleiman Askeri had now begun to concentrate the bulk of his forces at Nasiriyeh, preparatory to an advance by the desert route against Basra. He intended to observe and hold the British on the Tigris line at Kurna with a minimum force entrenched about

Bahran, while a column, composed chiefly of Arab tribesmen under the command of the veteran Mahomed Pacha Daghistani, was directed from Amarah *viâ* Hawizeh to the Karun River at Ahwaz, whence it would menace Mohammerah and the navigation of the lower Shatt-el-Arab.

This latter diversion by the Arabs induced General Barrett to detach a mixed column of Indian troops, under Brigadier-General Robinson, R.A., up the Karun River to meet it. An action was fought early in February, in which our troops were forced to retire, and lost a field gun. However, Daghistani did not pursue his advantage, but fell back to Ahwaz, where entrenchments gave him security.

During this time Askeri's main force was assembling at Nasiriyeh to attack Basra from the north-west by the desert route, and Sir Arthur Barrett threw up an entrenched camp at Shaiba, west of the city of Basra and astride the avenue of approach. The 16th Brigade occupied the entrenchments, and it was soon reinforced by the 18th Brigade, withdrawn from Kurna; and the leading units of the 30th Brigade (which was to be part of the newly formed 12th Division from Egypt) under Major-General Melliss had arrived at Basra and were sent to the entrenched camp, where Melliss took command as senior officer.

The 17th Brigade (of the 6th Division) was left to garrison Kurna, and the 12th Brigade of the new 12th Division was sent to Ahwaz up the Karun River. This was the situation during March and the commencement of April, 1915.

General Sir John Nixon of the Indian Army had arrived to take command of the whole force, which would amount to two divisions, and thus be called an army corps. But the new 12th Division under the command of General Gorringe could not be called complete, as it had no artillery. Sir Arthur Barrett, commanding the 6th Division, left Basra for India, resigning from ill-health, and was succeeded in the command by me; but before I could reach Mesopotamia the battle of Shaiba was fought on the 14th April. Suleiman Askeri, with about 20,000 Arabs, Kurds (the bulk of this force being irregulars and gendarmerie), and Turks, and 15 to 20 mountain guns, attacked the British entrenched camp. After a very hotly and closely contested battle at Shaiba and at Barjisiyah Wood, with varying success on either side, the Turks, after considerable loss—computed at 3,000 killed and wounded and 800 prisoners—finally retreated to Nasiriyeh, where Suleiman Askeri committed suicide. The loss of the British and Indian troops was very severe. I find in my diary 1,000 killed and wounded, including 18 officers killed and 42 wounded. The battle has often been described to me as a "touch-and-go affair," and Generals Melliss and Delamain both described it to me as a "regular soldiers' battle."

A few days after the battle of Shaiba, I arrived at Basra in the mail boat from Karachi; whence I had travelled from Rawal Pindi in the Panjaub, where I held a command at the time when I was selected for

a division on field service. I had been very unlucky as regards the war in France. Promoted Major-General in 1911, when commanding a brigade in South Africa, I had been at once appointed to command the East Anglian Division of Territorial Troops. In 1913 I resigned command of that Division, and was at once sent to India. The war broke out during the ensuing year, and the 2nd Rawal Pindi Division was, unfortunately for me, kept in India for service on the frontiers. It was composed of magnificent British regiments. I have never seen finer troops in the whole of my thirty-six years' service in the Army; and, as some of our Indian battalions were the finest in the Indian Army, the 2nd Division in India had been always looked on as the crack division and as the first for active service. It was a terrible blow for us—and the British soldiers were naturally indignant at being kept for service in India. Our finest regular troops, of splendid physique and admirable discipline, kept to do garrison work in India, were obliged to remain idle whilst armies of hastily raised and improvised soldiers were being sent to France from every corner of the British Empire!

It is well understood that the Government had to keep some troops in India on the North-West frontier, in view of the Afghans and frontier tribesmen; but India, even if it did become engaged in the war, could only be a secondary theatre, and it seems to me that its defence could easily have been undertaken by improvised white troops from over-seas, while highly

trained troops, like the 1st and 2nd Divisions in the North of India, could far better have been employed in the Principal Theatre.

My joy can be imagined when one night at the beginning of April, 1915, while I was at dinner at the Rawal Pindi Club, I received a telegram from the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief informing me that I was appointed to command the Sixth Division on field service in Mesopotamia in succession to General Barrett. A few days afterwards I found myself approaching Karachi in the dustiest train in the world, and, I should say, the hottest, with my aide-de-camp, Captain Bastow of the Yorkshire Regiment.

The voyage from Basra to Karachi up the Persian Gulf on the small mail-steamer *Dwarka,* of the British India Steam Navigation Company, occupied some five days. We sailed at midnight of the 18th-19th April from Karachi. There were rumours there that Indian troops from Egypt and France had been ordered to Mesopotamia, and that there were many German officers at Baghdad.

I find in my diary of the 19th April, on board the *Dwarka:* "Woke at 6 a.m., sleeping on deck. Course due west—smooth sea—the little packet doing some 14 knots. Land can be seen to starboard about twenty miles off. There is evidently the prospect of our becoming a large army of operations to take Mesopotamia and occupy it, as we have done in the case of Egypt. In the time of Justinian, the Roman Emperor, Mesopotamia was one of the richest wheat-

growing countries in the world, with numbers of canals, barrages, and reservoirs. The Persians invaded the country, and destroyed it and its cities, literally with fire and sword. Belisarius, the Roman general who gave a last flicker of glory to the expiring Eastern Empire, who had retaken Italy, Rome, and North Africa from the Barbarians, also partially retook Mesopotamia in 541 A.D., into which country he descended as far south as the fortified city of Ctesiphon. I remember a conversation with Hanotaux in France in 1911 when shooting at my father-in-law's place at Champs. Hanotaux advised me to buy the life of Belisarius, 'for,' said he, 'history will repeat itself, and you may perhaps fight where he fought; these countries will again become a great theatre of war.' Since that conversation we have seen the Italian Expedition to Tripoli, and we are now fighting in Egypt and Mesopotamia, where Belisarius fought. It is strange how history repeats itself. Who knows that I shall not eventually become military governor of Mesopotamia? . . . I have reason to be happy now, after the months of misery I have gone through since the war began, kept in India, to do watch-dog's work on the Bannu frontier, and to train troops at Pindi—whilst I was eating my heart out to be in France, which I love as much as England. . . .

"20th April.—We entered the horse-shoe harbour of Muscat about 9.30 a. m. We had been hauling into the coast of Oman since 7 a. m. This part of Oman is called the Pirate Coast. Muscat is a tiny

town—set in high rocky cliffs, which surround it—with a quaint old Portuguese fort. It is simply the palace of the Sultan of Muscat and the residence of Lieut.-Col. Benn, of the Indian Army, who is political officer here. There was a detachment of the 126th Baluchis and also of the 95th Russel's Infantry, perched up in fortified posts on precipitous heights watching the avenues of approach into the town."

We crossed the bar of the river at Fao at daybreak on 23rd April and were at Basra, some sixty or seventy miles up the Shatt-el-Arab, by midday. It had been very hot in the Persian Gulf, especially at the island rock of Koweit, where we stopped to deliver the mails, and I found it still hotter at Basra. The passage up the river, with a thick belt of palms on either side, reminded me of the Nile at Luxor or Assiut.

General Nixon, commanding the Expeditionary Force "D," was at his residence and Headquarters—the British Consulate— and in the course of conversation he said he was going to give me command of the coming Kurna-Amarah operations. That is to say that he had decided that I should drive the Turks away from their position north of Kurna, push northward ninety miles, and occupy Amarah, a very important town, which, he said, was part of the Basra province. This operation was to be my job. I was to make my preparations as quickly as possible, and send him my plan of operations for the execution of my mission, with which his Major-General, General Staff—General Kemball, R.A.—would furnish me at

once. I was allotted a house in Basra, being billeted on a Greek merchant, Mr. Antipas, who was very kind and hospitable, and my divisional staff were installed in the house next door to mine along the Ashar Creek. I arranged for a steam launch to take me up to Kurna in order to see the 17th Brigade and the entrenched camp, and to reconnoitre the enemy's position just north of that place. Before leaving Basra for Kurna I went across the water to Dirhamiyah, west of the city, and inspected the 18th Infantry Brigade, under Major-General Fry, which formed part of my division. The British battalion of this brigade, the 2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment, was in Basra in houses to be better sheltered from the heat. I was certainly not impressed with the physique of the three Indian battalions, which, together with the Norfolks, made up the 18th Infantry Brigade. They were all Bombay infantry battalions and could not compare in appearance with the North of India regiments; but it must be said that, when submitted to the test of regular artillery fire, they were in no way inferior to the Northern Indian regiments, and in some cases were even their superior.

The 16th Infantry Brigade, whose headquarters as part of the 6th (or Poona) Division in India was Belgaum, consisted of:—

2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment, which had distinguished itself at Shaiba;
7th Rajputs (detached to Ahwaz);
110th Mahrattas;
120th Rajputs.

I returned in the afternoon to Basra. I inspected the 2nd Norfolks on the following day, and also the 16th Infantry Brigade, under General Delamain, which was quartered in Basra. I left for Kurna soon after in a steam launch.

Basra was the ancient sea-port of Mesopotamia, and we read in the Arabian Nights that it was the home of Sinbad the Sailor. It is now a primitive little place, 70 miles up the Shatt-el-Arab. There are no quays, and few store-houses or other facilities. Ocean-going steamers, drawing up to 19 feet, can ascend the Shatt-el-Arab as far as Basra, and those drawing 7½ to 12 feet can reach as far as Kurna, another 40 miles up river.

The flood season was on, and for miles the river had overflowed its banks. Water extended as far as the eye could reach. Occasionally there were oases of palm trees in little groups or belts; and, here and there, flat-roofed, mud-built Arab villages on slight eminences resembled islands in an ocean. The scenery reminded me very much of High Nile between Cairo and Assiut. This gave me an idea of the sort of battle I should have to fight near Kurna. It was plain that the only way one could advance was in boats, for during the flood season on the Tigris the banks of the river are invariably inundated, which effectually prevents all marching, or movement of wheeled traffic, over great parts of the country.

I arrived at Kurna the same night, for I had a fast launch. There I had a long talk with Brigadier-General Dobbie, commanding the 17th Infantry Bri-

gade, on the subject of our approaching battle. I had met Dobbie when I was with my regiment, the 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers, at Mandalay, in 1903; and he was commanding an Indian battalion in Burmah at the time. He was well-known as a very brave and very energetic fellow. He told me that the Turkish position was one of great strength, owing to the deep creeks that ran across the front, with a veritable sea of flood water and thick reeds in addition. The Turkish redoubts were situated on small sand hills, eminences in the midst of the marshes rising out of the water like islands. But I should see for myself at daylight. Dobbie was quartered on the narrow spot of dry land at Kurna at the bifurcation of the Tigris and Euphrates. H.M.S. sloop of war *Odin* was anchored in the Tigris at Kurna.

In the morning I ascended the observation tower, a rickety structure of wooden scaffolding, like a lighthouse on sands, which rose to 100 feet at its top platform, and looked over the tops of the palm trees. Thence I had a very good view of the enemy's position, and I found it a very strong one.

The officers with me explained the position in detail as I used my glasses. Floods, which had overflowed the banks of the Tigris, leaving no trace of its course, gave the landscape the air of Lakes Superior or Michigan in America. Sand-hill islands appeared in these waters. They were Turkish redoubts.

The Turkish main line of resistance was the position of Bahran. There I could see a half-moon of sand hills rising out of the water, some few houses

denoting a village, and what looked like gun embrasures in a redoubt or two—all at about 10,000 yards' distance, say six miles. The Rotah and Maziblah positions were just visible. In the foreground was the curtain to the position—the Norfolk Hill redoubt, some 3,500 to 4,000 yards from the observation tower, One Tree Hill (opposite Norfolk Hill) on a sand spit rising out of the water, on what was, in reality, the left bank of the Tigris, One Tower Hill, and Two Gun Hill. They were supported at 5,000 yards' range from Bahran.

The Bahran position was supported by artillery fire from Rotah and Maziblah. Sakricha was at 4,500 yards from Maziblah. I was informed that mines strewed the Tigris channel north of the boom at Fort Snipe, the most northerly point of the Kurna defences. According to our intelligence reports, the Turkish force comprised a small division of some 6 battalions, 10 guns and about 600 Mejahidin (Arab riflemen), the *Marmarice* river gunboat, and some 1,200 marsh Arabs, armed with rifles, and installed in the marshes and thick reeds on the west flank of "Norfolk Hill" and "Gun Hill" redoubts. They were posted there possibly to counter-attack our infantry advance against the Turkish position, or to check an enveloping movement from the westward.

The position of their guns was as follows:—

2 on Gun Hill;
2 on One Tower Hill;
4 at Bahran;
2 at Rotah.

Solely owing to the floods it was a position of great strength. In fact, I had reason to think that Wolfe's job at Quebec was a fool to mine. Instead of being able to use my Principal Mass in a turning movement against the redoubts from the westward, which was the manœuvre indicated, but which the sea of deep floods and marshes rendered out of the question, I should have to deliver a frontal attack, methodically undertaken in successive phases as in siege warfare. This is the most unsatisfactory and costly manner of attack, and one which, in present circumstances, could not give decisive results if the enemy stood to his guns, as I had every reason to believe he would.

"Talent in a general consists in containing the front of the enemy with a part of his forces, whilst he uses his principal effort with his Principal Mass against the enemy's flank," said General Von Willisen—and, he might have added with advantage, against that flank which lies nearest the enemy's natural line of retreat, viz., his line of communications. Owing to the enormous increase of fire effect, an attack on an enemy's front or centre becomes more and more difficult, and the chances of success of such an attack are enormously reduced, whilst failure may result by the attacking force being itself enveloped and destroyed. Nothing would induce me to execute a frontal attack with the whole of my force under ordinary circumstances, but here was I, in my first command as a general on active service, not only condemned to a purely frontal attack, but in addition my infantry must advance to the attack in boats or

be drowned; and, finally, I must use warships in the Tigris channel, if we could fish up the mines! Here was an example of the difference between theory and practice.

I saw I was committed to a peculiarly difficult operation, with an unknown command under me. It seemed to me that the betting was well in favour of the Turks; and I am quite certain that, if I had been in the position of the Turkish General, I should have inflicted a bloody defeat on the British. We won this battle simply through the want of resolution or courage of the Turkish commander, who, instead of standing firmly, fled as soon as I had carried the curtain of his position—as will be seen in the account of the Battle of Kurna.

After a few gunshots to show me the ranges, I returned to Basra. I felt very serious over my job, and it was not difficult to see that Dobbie and his command felt that the prospect was none too rosy. Though they were all stout, hardy soldiers who feared nothing, they thought we risked a disaster in such an attack in boats. But there was no other way of attacking.

It was with great reluctance that I decided that a wide turning manœuvre to the westward of the Turkish position by the El Huir creek was out of the question owing to the impenetrability of the great zone of weeds and water. In fact, I was greatly impressed by the strength of the Turkish position, and accordingly I asked Sir John Nixon to come to Kurna with me and have a look at it.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE AND BATTLE OF KURNA

IN my talk with Sir John Nixon on 23rd April, I had already suggested to him a plan or project of operations for throwing the enemy (entrenched astride the Tigris at Kurna) north of Amarah. Since the flooded nature of the country in the region of the Tigris rendered all manœuvre impossible, my plan embodied a combination of a frontal or preparatory attack by my division on the enemy in position astride the Tigris north of Kurna, whilst a strategic turning movement was carried out by Gorringe's division (the 12th) in a westerly direction from Ahwaz or Hawizeh, whence I thought it would be possible to find a route or track, by which he could attain the Tigris about Kalat Salih. I knew the Turks and Germans had found a way from Amarah to Ahwaz *viâ* Hawizeh, and had got guns across. Such a turning manœuvre by the 12th Division would automatically cause the retreat of the force entrenched astride the Tigris north of Kurna.

On 27th April, Sir John Nixon, on my return to Basra from Kurna, said he thought the plan a good one, but that it involved a violation of Persian territory. Of course, he added, if the 12th Division had

a fight and beat the enemy they might follow them up in pursuit all the way to Amarah. "This amounts to the same thing as my project," I find in my diary.

As a step towards concentrating my division for battle, I asked Headquarters on this date to allow the 119th Infantry at Basra, which formed part of General Dobbie's brigade, to be sent up to Kurna to be united with its proper command. I also requested that the 17th Company of Sappers and Miners at Basra be sent to Dobbie's brigade at Kurna, and that I should be permitted to push forward Delamain's 16th Brigade to the east bank of the Tigris near Kataiban, some 15 miles north of Basra.

The three trans-Border Pathan companies of one of the Indian regiments were disaffected. It was rumoured that they had fired on their comrades in battle at Sahil, and they said openly that they did not want to fight their brother religionists, the Turks. I suggested to Headquarters that the three disaffected companies should be made into a small labour battalion at Basra, but that the five remaining companies of this regiment should remain with my command. They were not trans-Border Pathans and were of excellent quality, and they were, besides, furious that the conduct of such men should represent the battalion. Although short of three companies, I knew the remaining five (of Sihks and Dogras) would uphold the reputation of the regiment.

As regards the Artillery, the Army Commander

sanctioned the following for my operation at Kurna:—

Land Section. Land Artillery.

4—5-in. Howitzers, 1/5 Hants, R.F.A.

2—4-in. Guns, 104th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A.

2—5-in. Guns, 86th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A.

Group Commander, Lieut.-Col. H. D. Grier, R.A.

These Guns were then in position at or near Kurna.

River Section. Mobile Heavy Artillery on Barges.

2—4-in. Guns, 104th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A., at the Custom House.

1—5-in. Gun, 86th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A., from Khora Post (ordered in).

1—18-Pdr. Gun from Ordnance Depot.

Probable Group Commander, Lieut.-Col. Molesworth (for the time being it was to be commanded by the Senior Officer present, 2nd-Lt. Johnson, R.G.A.).

30th Mountain Battery.

30th Mountain Battery on Bellum Rafts (6 guns).

Commander, Major H. J. Cotter, R.A.

Steps were immediately taken by Brigadier-General G. B. Smith, R.A., who was my B.G.R.A., 6th

Division, to have the necessary barges and rafts prepared for the above.

I asked General Nixon to add a battery of R.F.A., if possible, for rapid accurate fire at long ranges, but this he was unable to do.

I had 300 rounds per gun for heavy guns and howitzers.

I asked for my divisional signal company to be given back to the division and also for my divisional cavalry.

General Kemball, the M.G.G.S., replied that he quite realised my wish to concentrate my division, "but you must remember that we have no line of communication troops, that the 12th Division is now away, and that your division has to find the necessary troops for that duty."

The sapper companies could not be spared to me.

Thus, when I had shortly to fight a battle, and wished naturally to concentrate my division for fighting, I found that I was supposed to provide not only troops for line of communication work, but that one brigade—the 18th—was kept to garrison a fort at Dirhamiyeh, covering Basra from the south-west. It is instructive to see the way in which Government was starting an expedition to invade Mesopotamia; all the mistakes and errors of our maritime expeditions during the 18th and early part of the 19th Centuries are here repeated with interest. Even Bonaparte could not have succeeded with methods like this; for my battle at Kurna, I was to have only two brigades out of my proper three, although I pointed out that

on the Economy of Force principle the 18th Brigade, less one battalion, might be given to me for my battle. One battalion was ample to hold the fort at Dirhamiyeh, which no one was coming to attack. Not only this, but, on the good old Indian plan, all the clerks in the offices of the Headquarters Staff in Basra were combatants taken from my Division; and, to my horror, I found in addition that all the military police in that place, and the batmen of staff officers, were taken out of its fighting ranks.

Truly a heart-breaking state of affairs for one imbued with the importance of the principle of Economy of Force! However, I never let the subject drop, and I got Sir John Nixon to ask for a draft of Dorset Territorials from India to fill up the ranks of the Dorsets, who were now reduced to 600 rifles, including employed men. I also begged him to give an order sending all British batmen back to the ranks.

The distribution of the 6th Division, when I took over command at Basra, was as follows:—

16th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General Delamain): Dorsets; 104th Rifles; 119th Mahrattas; 20th Punjabis, at Basra; 119th Inf. attached.

17th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General Dobbie): less 119th Inf. (in Basra attached to 16th Brigade). At Kurna.

18th Infantry Brigade (Major-General Fry): Norfolks; 110th Mahrattas; 120th Inf.; 7th Rajputs. At Dirhamiyeh.

Some of my divisional troops were attached to the 12th Division at Ahwaz, and my field artillery, the 10th Brigade, R.F.A., were also attached to this division, which had been sent from India with no guns of its own.

On 28th April I again proceeded to Kurna. I had gone into the question of the "bellums"—small country row-boats that the Commander-in-Chief was very keen I should utilise in order to attack the Turks in their positions at Kurna. These "bellums," it was arranged, should be armoured by utilising machine-gun shields fixed on the bows; 32 shielded and 50 plain were required for a battalion, i.e., 328 per brigade. The water in the Tigris had greatly increased. Three enemy mines had been picked up, six miles from Kurna, by the armoured tugboat *Lewis Pelly*. The mines were moored to each bank on a slack cable, so that if a vessel did not strike one, she must foul the cable, and, forging ahead, drag the mines violently in against her sides. I at once offered a reward of four hundred rupees to any Arab who found a mine in the river—the effect of which was that hundreds of Arabs spent their time hunting for the Turkish mines.

On 29th April I inspected the 17th Brigade. In spite of the great heat, the Oxford Light Infantry looked particularly fit—as, indeed, did all the rest of the Brigade, especially the 22nd Punjabis, a very fine regiment. The entrenched camp at Kurna I found quite strong; in fact, to my mind, it was too much fortified.

A fair amount of sniping at night went on at Kurna, the Arab riflemen coming close to our camp and firing into it. On the 29th April I returned to Basra, leaving Kurna at 11.30 a. m. and arriving at Basra about 4.30 p. m. (The distance was about 40 miles, and we had a strong current in our favour.) There I found that my horses had arrived from India, and were looking very fit.

I found that I had to complain again to General Headquarters at Basra regarding my division being drawn on to supply troops for base and line of communication work. The General of communications, Major-General Davison, gave orders to units of mine detailed for L. of C. work, and the General Headquarter Staff began to take orderlies away from the Norfolks and so forth. The reason was that Army Headquarters in India had allocated no troops for Line of Communication defence. This was not only a source of constant friction between the two staffs, but also a very serious dissemination of fighting force, and nothing could have been worse from a military point of view.

It was reported that two squadrons of the 33rd Cavalry with Gorringe had been ambushed near Ahwaz, three British officers and 12 to 14 men being killed. This detachment of cavalry was on reconnaissance work under Major Anderson. They came across an Arab encampment, where the Sheikh proposed a friendly talk and gave information regarding the position of the Turks. After feeding and water-

ing, the detachment was suddenly attacked by a considerable force of Arab horsemen.

The 12th Division under Gen. Gorringe was now assembled on the Karun River two miles north of Braikeh.

On 5th May I inspected General Fry's 18th Brigade at Dirhamiyeh. It was isolated from Basra by a veritable inland sea, due to the floods of the Tigris and the Euphrates, which had given rise to a question as to whether troops should be maintained on the far side of this great lake, now that they could only be laboriously reinforced in emergency by troops from Basra slowly punted across in bellums.

My bellum with only my A.D.C. and myself took two hours to cross. I landed at "Old Basra," the site, indicated by mounds, of the ancient city of the Arabian Nights. Zubair is in reality the only remaining part of a once great city. I inspected a new redoubt which was being constructed here. It was practically finished, and I found that it was strong and constructed under good conditions. It contained a well of brackish water, which could be used in emergency. (The water in the estuary near the shore is as salt as the sea.) Much labour was required to level the terrain around this redoubt. As soon as the mamelons were raised, the redoubt would dominate the whole country from the landing place as far as Zubair to the west, up to long-gun range to the south, and to Shaiba fort to the north-west. One battalion I found would be sufficient garrison, with two post guns, supplies for one month for the gar-

rison, and 500 rounds per rifle. This is what I recommended to Sir John Nixon, advising him that the Dirhamiyeh entrenched camp, with its brigade as garrison, was quite unnecessary, and a dissemination of force that should be given up at once and the troops brought into Basra. I suggested condensers being installed in the Old Basra redoubt, also that the Sheikh of Zubair, who had always loyally supported us, should be paid liberally by us, as a means to obtaining quick information regarding the enemy.

Old Basra redoubt would thus be a bridgehead for our troops at New Basra. When the water subsided a proper causeway with a tram line was desirable to connect Basra with the redoubt, which I suggested should be called "Fort George." I believe all these suggestions were carried out.

The staff of the 6th Division when I took command were as follows:—

Personal Staff.

A.D.C.—Captain Bastow, Yorkshire Regt.

Staff.

G.S.O. I—Colonel R. N. Gamble, D.S.O., British Service.
G.S.O. II—Major G. A. F. Sanders, R.E.
G.S.O. III—Captain B. G. Peel, 81st Pioneers.
D.A.A.G.—Major J. H. M. Davie, Poona Horse.
A.Q.M.G.—Colonel L. W. Shakespear, Indian Army.

D.A.Q.M.G.—Captain F. H. Stapleton, 1st Oxford Light Infantry.

Administration.

A.D.M.S.—Colonel P. Hehir, I.M.S.
D.A.D.M.S.—Lt.-Col. H. O. B. Browne Mason, R.A.M.C.
A.D.S.—Lt.-Col. A. S. R. Annesley, S.T.C. (Temp. A.D.T., L. of C.).
A.D.T.—Major E. E. Preston, S.T.C.
D.E.C.—Lt.-Col. V. W. Evans, R.E.
D.A.D.O.S.—Captain R. H. Begg, R.A.
A.D.A.S.—Captain H. S. Cardew, 34th Divnl. Signal Company.

Provost Marshal.

Treasure Chest—Lt. G. C. R. Huddleston, 22nd Punjabis.

The 16th Infantry Brigade at Basra, which I had inspected shortly before, was now flooded out of its cantonments at Basra by the rising waters of the Tigris, and had to be cantoned in the city in houses. I made an attempt to encamp it on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite Basra, but that site was also quickly flooded.

On 9th May I was up at Kurna again. General Dobbie had directed a reconnaissance, which was carried out by the stern-wheeler *Shushan* (an old Nile stern-wheeler), carrying thirty rifles of the Oxfords on board, under command of Lieut. Cookson, R.N. The reconnaissance was to ascertain if the El

Huir creek to the west of the Tigris was practicable. The creek proved to be only about twelve feet wide and six feet deep, and a forest of reeds some six feet high made everything from the lower deck of the *Shushan* invisible.

The Arabs opened rifle fire on all sides as the *Shushan* advanced slowly up the creek, and the steamer had eventually to retire with four casualties, Lieutenant Cookson being severely wounded by a shot through the shoulder. However, after having been bandaged up, he very pluckily went on the bridge and brought the steamer out.

On 10th May, I practised the Howitzers on One Tree Hill and Tower Hill—the shooting against the latter with lyddite being particularly good.

On the same day also I received definite orders from Sir John Nixon to drive the enemy from his position north of Kurna and to occupy Amarah. My force consisted of the 6th Division, less the 18th Brigade, some heavy artillery, and a Naval Flotilla, placed at my disposal for the battle.

I have shown above that the mission given to me by Sir John Nixon was one of great difficulty, and involved a hazardous battle—I say hazardous because the floods, having rendered the whole country a great sea, compelled me to a frontal attack, which is the most costly and the most to be avoided in war and the least promising of success. Having won the battle, a pursuit of ninety miles lay before me! At the end of the ninety miles was Amarah, the most important town south of Baghdad, and a seat of government.

It had magazines and stores, with a garrison, and so in all probability would be stoutly defended. Finally, my operation was to be continuous. I can imagine not only field officers going up for their examination for tactical fitness scratching their heads over a problem of this sort, but also Major-Generals, had they been treated in such a way for promotion to Lieutenant-General! The Commander-in-Chief in India, talking over this operation with me afterwards, laughed and remarked: "You always said you would like to be faced with a most difficult problem to be carried out in war. Well, you got your wish in this Kurna-Amarah one."

As I have said, it was known that the Tigris had been strewn with mines by the German engineers with the enemy, and two enormous iron lighters had been sunk in the channel of the river, to block the progress of our warships, somewhere about Rotah.

My instructions from Sir John Nixon, given to me on 10th May, were "not only to drive the enemy from his present positions between the Pear Drop Bend and Kurna and to capture his guns, but also to push him up river and occupy Amarah—the operation to be continuous." If the battle was successful the following localities were indicated to me for attention: Rotah, for employing troops to remove the reported first obstruction in the river; Ezra's Tomb, as a suitable post on the line of communications, 22 miles from Kurna; Kila Saleh, as a post on the line of communications, 56 miles from Kurna, which was the market town of the Al Bu Muhamad tribe, with a

population of 2,000; Abu Sidra, junction of the Majar Kebir Canal with the Tigris—a route across the marshes from Nasiriyeh, 76 miles from Kurna.

Amarah is 87 miles from Kurna, and was a Turkish civil and military station of importance.

For the above operation my available force was as follows:—16th and 17th Infantry Brigades (the 18th Infantry Brigade as I have shown was detained for duty in and about Basra); divisional troops comprising the Norfolks and 48th Pioneers, 30th Mountain Battery; 22nd Company of sappers and miners; 86th and 104th Heavy Batteries; 1/5 Hants Howitzer Battery (Territorials); bridging train and a company of Sirmur Sappers and Miners; the 6th Divisional Signal Company (34th Signal Company).

The naval flotilla placed at my disposal for the operation comprised: H.M. Sloops *Espiègle, Clio* and *Odin;* the armed launches *Shaitan, Lewis Pelly, Lawrence, Miner* (small tug-boats with armoured shields); two naval horse-boats, which carried 4.7 guns.

The *Mejidieh, Blosse Lynch,* and *P. 1,* steamers to transport troops.

On 11th May I submitted my plan or project of operations to Sir John Nixon in the following memorandum:—

MEMORANDUM "A."

(A) Memorandum on the action I propose in order to take the enemy's position north of Kurna, which lies astride the flooded Tigris, on the line of Mazi-

blah-Pear Drop Bend-Rotah, with advance posts on the line of the Birbeck Creek, i.e., Gun Hill and Tower Hill, Norfolk Hill and One Tree Hill (east bank).

(B) Having taken the above formidable position by the collar, to occupy Amarah, and

(C) Indicate number of troops required to guard the line of communications from Kurna northward to Amarah.

(1) After careful consideration and observation, there are three ways of attack in my opinion, which I will briefly discuss:

1. To attack the enemy in front with the flotilla on the river, co-operating with a minimum force of infantry and the heavy artillery on the West Bank of the Tigris, whilst a turning movement attack or offensive wing of manœuvre, consisting of the Principal Mass, would execute a turning movement at the distance of some 5,000 yards to the west of the Tigris, and, by a wide sweeping movement, strike the enemy at Maziblah, menacing his line of retreat. This manœuvre on dry land is the simplest and the best.

2. But the great depth of flood water over the marshes on the West Bank, the great depth of the creeks to cross, and the height of the reeds, make the work of wading or propelling "bellums," armoured or unarmoured, most exhausting—and, moreover, the amount of Arab opposition in the marshes,

demonstrated in the recent reconnaissance of the El Huir Creek on 9th May, are a sufficient indication that a turning movement by the west is undesirable and almost impossible, save as a desperate attempt.

It is a thousand pities, for such a manœuvre would roll up and clear all the enemy's gun positions automatically with its advance, and would be able finally to close with the bayonet—the one measure which causes the Turks to give way at once, though no one is more tenacious and obstinate behind any kind of defence work which cannot be taken by the collar. If I had dry land to work on, it is the only manœuvre I would undertake.

3. The same manœuvre can be carried out, using the Eastern Bank of the Tigris for the turning movement by the Principal Mass or offensive wing of manœuvre. This has the disadvantage of having to cross the Rotah Creek and the Tigris River in flood under the enemy's guns and does not menace his line of retreat.

4. Frontal attack against the hostile centre, assisted by an enveloping movement along the Eastern Bank by a minimum force of infantry.

The frontal attack to consist of the Principal Mass of the force, all the heavy guns, and the flotilla on the river depends for its success on the intimate cooperation of the land force and the ships, and on the effect of the heavy gun fire being what we expect it to be.

The operation to be undertaken methodically in successive phases, with no precipitation, as in siege warfare methods.

After due consideration and observation, as stated above, I have come to the determination to adopt No. 4 above—very reluctantly I confess—but the reconnaissance referred to in para. 2 indicates clearly the risks and dangers and labours of a turning movement by the Western Bank; and I have sufficiently indicated in para. 3 the undesirability of the Eastern Bank for a turning move.

I should carry out the frontal attack on the enemy's position north of Kurna in successive phases:—

1st Phase. The attack on Tower Hill and Gun Hill, to make the line of Birbeck Creek.

5.

Frontal Attack.	17th Inf. Bde., less 22nd Punjabis and half 17th Co.	
Principal Mass. West bank of River.	S. & M. & Pontoons. Half Sirmur S. & M. Co. 22nd Co. S. & M. A Battery R.F.A. Howitzer Battery. Heavy Artillery on West Bank.	Brigadier-General Dobbie.

In Ships to land as occasion requires.	16th Infantry Brigade.	Brigadier-General Delamain.
River.	Naval steamers (*vide* Memo. B. attached). Armed Steamers (*vide* Memo. B. attached).	S.N.O.
General Reserve. Follows the frontal attack in ships till occasion indicates.	2nd Bn. Norfolk Regt. 48th Pioneers.	
Enveloping Attack.	Mixed detachments 22nd Punjabis.	Lt.-Col. Blois Johnson.
East Bank of river.	Half Co. Sirmur S. & M. Guns on rafts (or heavy gun if possible or preferably a couple of 18-pounders on rafts or pontoons).	

6. The guns of the frontal attack and of the ships would be concentrated on Tower Hill and Gun Hill, so as to pin the defenders down and destroy their guns, etc., after which Norfolk Hill will be dealt with when the frontal attack advances.

Whilst the enveloping attack on the Eastern bank moves forward from Mezera on a parallel line some 5,000 yards' distance from the Tigris, in order to turn One Tree Hill and enfilade One Tower Hill and Gun Hill from that locality or neighbourhood and get a footing on the sand dunes 3,500 yards east of Bahran, the infantry of the frontal attack (17th Bde.) moves forward, General Dobbie ensuing the service of security of his left (west) flank by means of a flank detachment (bellums), and a gunboat will proceed up the El Huir Creek with the object of taking up the attention of the Arabs in this direction; infantry in bellums, etc., to take Norfolk Hill and Tower Hill, Shrapnel Hill, and if possible Gun Hill, and get a footing in Alowa and Jala.

7. Under cover of above fire mine-sweeping by protected steam launches with steel hawsers connecting them will be carried out covering the advance of the flotilla to the mouth of Birbeck Creek and One Tree Hill, where the warships will bombard Bahran whilst the tugs and barges and launches will bring up the heavy artillery from Kurna in order to install them by means of rafts, etc., at One Tower Hill and Alowa. (Apparently considerable amount of dry ground.)

9. The 17th Bde. will endeavour to install itself on Gun Hill and Sand Hills; whilst the 16th Bde. will be brought up and occupy Alowa and Jala (utilisation of night if necessary) if possible. I hope not to be forced to disembark the 16th Brigade, i.e.,

Group No. 1, till I land them at Bahran—whilst the Naval Flotilla would make a demonstration.

The installation of the heavy artillery of the Frontal attack at One Tower Hill and Alowa concludes the first phase, which will possibly take all day if the enemy hold firm.

Second Phase

10. After mine-sweeping, the naval flotilla should make a dash for Bahran, under support of heavy artillery fire from One Tower Hill and the sand dunes (east bank, western end of the dunes, at roughly 3,500 yards range to Bahran).

11. The 16th and 17th Bdes., Sappers and pontoons at head of columns, advance against Bahran. The Provisional Bde. from the Eastern flank crosses the river in the Halla-Jala vicinity (tugs and barges), and becomes the General Reserve to the Division—unless it seems more advantageous to direct it against Rotah, etc.

Third Phase (*Maziblah*)

12. On reaching Bahran the Division would vigorously attack the line of hillocks and entrenchments with the bayonet, assisted by the fire of the warships, which would enfilade the hillocks from the river. The S.N.O. portioning a ship or ships to incommode Rotah and the guns at Maziblah.

(Removal of possible obstruction necessary for this.)

MEMORANDUM "B."

13. By the commencement of the third phase I should expect the enemy to be on the run, and in pursuit all manœuvres are good.

I should embark the 16th Brigade (group No. 1) in steamers to hurry after the gunboats, which would be leading and hammering the enemy, keeping on pushing and hammering them under my orders.

I should accompany the leading troops, leaving the next senior Brigade Commander with orders to collect the Division and follow on in ships, my object being to enter Amarah with the enemy. I should probably have to fight at Amarah and might have to unite again in order to beat the enemy and occupy Amarah.

14. Kurna and the new posts proposed, or rather indicated by you, in your memorandum, you say cannot be furnished by 12th Division troops, nor is it certain when General Fry and the remainder of his 18th Brigade will be given back to me. Once in Amarah and made sufficiently strong to hold that place, I should send back the rest of the Division to Kurna. I think that is what Sir John would wish—as he must keep a Central Mass in his hand in the Basra Zone, I take it.

15. One Brigade should be sufficient to hold Amarah; Kurna would have only one battalion and

a gunboat; and say a couple of double companies at Maziblah, half a battalion at Kale Salih, and a company at Abu Sidra. The garrisons to be cut down to a minimum on principle of Economy of Force. In case of success with the Arabs, the riverain Arabs in particular, I should not want to look over my shoulder.

2 battalions in all from Kurna (inclusive) to the last post on line to Amarah.

General Remarks on the Above Memoranda

16. I consider that the above memoranda will sufficiently indicate my intentions to the Army Commander. Operation Orders, of course, I dictate or issue as the occasion arises; for example, only on the day before the first attack at Kurna should I issue my operation orders. They will be short and brief, and all pertaining to the flotilla, rafts, bellums, etc., will be contained in separate memoranda. Otherwise operation orders would become of extraordinary length in such operations as we are engaged in, involving land and sea forces. In the second and third phases I should dictate orders, sent very briefly by signal (probably from the foretop of a warship), in which possibly reference would be made to the numbers of paras. in the memoranda, a copy of which will be issued to all Brigade Commanders, S.N.O., and Chief Staff Officers.

17. I should be glad to have one of my field bat-

teries back from the 12th Division. I want six 18-pounders to mount on decks of steamers. Mountain guns recoil too much, and heavy guns on barges fire so slowly—not nearly rapidly enough.

I should mount

2 on the *Mejidieh,*
1 or 2 on the *Malamir,*
1 on the *Salemi,*

and push these steamers forward into the fight.[1]

18. I want our own 17th Co. Sappers and Miners back, and will hand over the Sirmur Sappers to the 12th Division (i.e., L. of C.), to whom they probably belong.

19. I want Lt.-Col. Annesley as A.D.S., and a new man as A.D.T., *vice* Swan, invalided.

20. One Marine Transport Officer, Lt. Marsh, R.I.M., suggested.

21. Masters of transports must know the river. *Mejidieh, Blosse Lynch, Malamir, Salemi,* first claim, and the tugs are known, but paddlers should come last, as they are new to the river.

22. L. of C. should take over wounded up to the daily refilling points, and refill us with food, ammunition, Engineers' stores, etc., also E.P. Tents if asked for.

These refilling points—

Kuna - - - For the day we move out.

[1] My field artillery brigade had been lent to the 12th Division. The battery I asked for could not be granted me.

Ezra's Tomb	From the day we move our reserve forward.
Majar Kebir Kale Salih -	The day our advanced troops reach the next point.

E.g., on the day our advanced troops reach Kale Salih the L. of C. should take over Ezra's Tomb to allow my tail troops to relinquish it and move up river.

23. My G.S.O. is working out a list of ships and rafts, including motor boats, which are absolutely necessary for the speedy transmission of orders and seeing that orders are actually and promptly carried out.

MEMORANDUM "C."

24. For mine-sweeping I would suggest that the launches or tugs should be protected on the lines on which we found General Gordon's steamers fortified in 1885, when we met these steamers at Metemmeh. They were very frequently engaged at close quarters on a low hill with Krupp guns in the hands of the Dervishes. They were wooden paddle-steamers of the "Penny steamboat" type, with boiler plates and beams built up on the boats resembling three forts, loopholed, and with a gun forward and sometimes aft. They were very strong and stood lots of shelling from Krupps.

Basra, May 11th, 1915.

On the same day I issued a memorandum on the

action I should take addressed to all senior officers in my command, such as the Brigade Commanders, the Senior Naval Officer, and the Chief Staff Officers. In a conversation with Sir John Nixon and his M.G.G.S. the question came up of the independence of the Naval Commander in the combined land and sea operations. I told Sir John that there could be no question of a divided command. I knew by history what that meant. I said that I must be in supreme command, and I asked General Nixon so to inform the S.N.O. General Nixon agreed with me, and this was done.

There was now great activity in Basra in preparing armoured protected "bellums," or punts, to transport the infantry over the floods and marshes to approach the enemy's position; in mounting heavy artillery on gun platforms erected on iron lighters, and in preparing the steamer transports, etc., etc. The work of Colonel Evans, R.E., and his sappers in this direction was admirable, and I found the former experience of my staff in matters pertaining to transports and bellums invaluable.

The leading feature about the coming battle of Kurna was that the infantry must advance in boats, and the only boats available at Basra were the Arab "bellums," or "balams," on each of which a crew of one N.C.O. and 9 men could be placed. There were only sufficient "bellums" to fit out the 17th Infantry Brigade. I have no space in this book to attach the instructions issued to the division on the subject of the allotment of bellums, and the lists of gear, stores,

and rations carried on board these craft, though it might have been interesting to the military student to see the vast quantity of arrangements we had to improvise in order to carry out this amphibious operation, which resembled in some ways the landing operations of Abercrombie at Aboukir in March, 1801, except that my infantry were in "bellums" instead of ships' boats.

I had ordered the 17th Brigade to start training in the poling of these bellums, which is practically the same as punting on the Thames, in the beginning of May, 1915, when I arrived at Kurna. But a bellum contingent was being trained in the 17th Brigade in the beginning of March, with a view to undertaking any amphibious operations on a small scale which might be required in the floods round Kurna. Shortage of bellums and equipment notwithstanding, fair progress was made, and by the middle of April the 32 men per battalion thus trained were an invaluable help in carrying out the more extended scheme of boat-training which I demanded of the brigade. It was now proposed to ship the whole brigade on the bellums across the marsh to attack the Turkish positions up river. To this end a minimum of 126 men per battalion had to be trained, and as many above that number as time and equipment would permit. Allowing 16 boats per company, 32 trained men were necessary for their propulsion, while a margin above this number was clearly imperative in order to have men ready to replace casualties. During May the work was carried on vigorously, and the shortage of

boats was the only handicap to progress. These could not be got from Basra till the end of the month, but on May 28th a full-dress rehearsal took place, and the unusual spectacle of a whole Brigade manœuvring in boats was to be seen.

It had been thought advisable by Sir John Nixon that as many of these boats as possible should be armoured with steel plates as a protection against rifle fire, and a successful trial of a boat thus armoured had been carried out on the Ashar Creek. Unfortunately it was forgotten that the marsh round Kurna was not open water, but was covered with reeds of varying denseness, and thus these plates, which projected over both gunwales for several feet and dropped to the water level, considerably hampered the progress of the boat where the reeds were thin, and absolutely checked it where they were thick. However, owing to the protection these armour plates would give from rifle fire, and the fact that General Nixon was strongly in favour of them, they were retained; but a compromise was effected by joining two boats together for stability and reversing the plates so that they did not project below the level of the gunwales. It was hoped that they could be got along in this manner, at any rate during the first part of the attack, where the reeds were not unduly thick, and thus it proved in the battle.

Each battalion had one-quarter of its boats armoured and three-quarters unarmoured. Besides these, machine-guns were mounted on specially constructed armoured rafts, as also was the 30th Moun-

tain Battery, while the field ambulance was provided with light unarmoured rafts. All these craft were provided with light bamboo punt-poles, with auxiliary paddles for the uninstructed men of the crew. The pole was the only possible means of progression through the shallow and reed-grown, but sound-bottomed, field of battle. It is not suggested that all the hastily trained punters were finished watermen, but the general average was good enough to permit of the brigade deploying from line of march into line of quarter column, and advancing thence to the attack in line of companies with a reasonable amount of precision of manœuvre. So much for preliminaries.

I was very sorry to lose the services of Brigadier-General Dobbie of the Indian Staff Corps, commanding the 17th Infantry Brigade, at about this juncture. He was sent home on sick leave owing to an injury, in the shape of a damaged ankle due to a fall on board a transport in a rolling sea. The ankle got steadily worse, and it was decided by Sir John Nixon that it interfered with General Dobbie's efficiency in the field, greatly to General Dobbie's grief. I asked that Colonel Climo, of the 24th Punjabis, should be made temporary Brigadier-General in command of the brigade, and this was at once carried out.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF KURNA

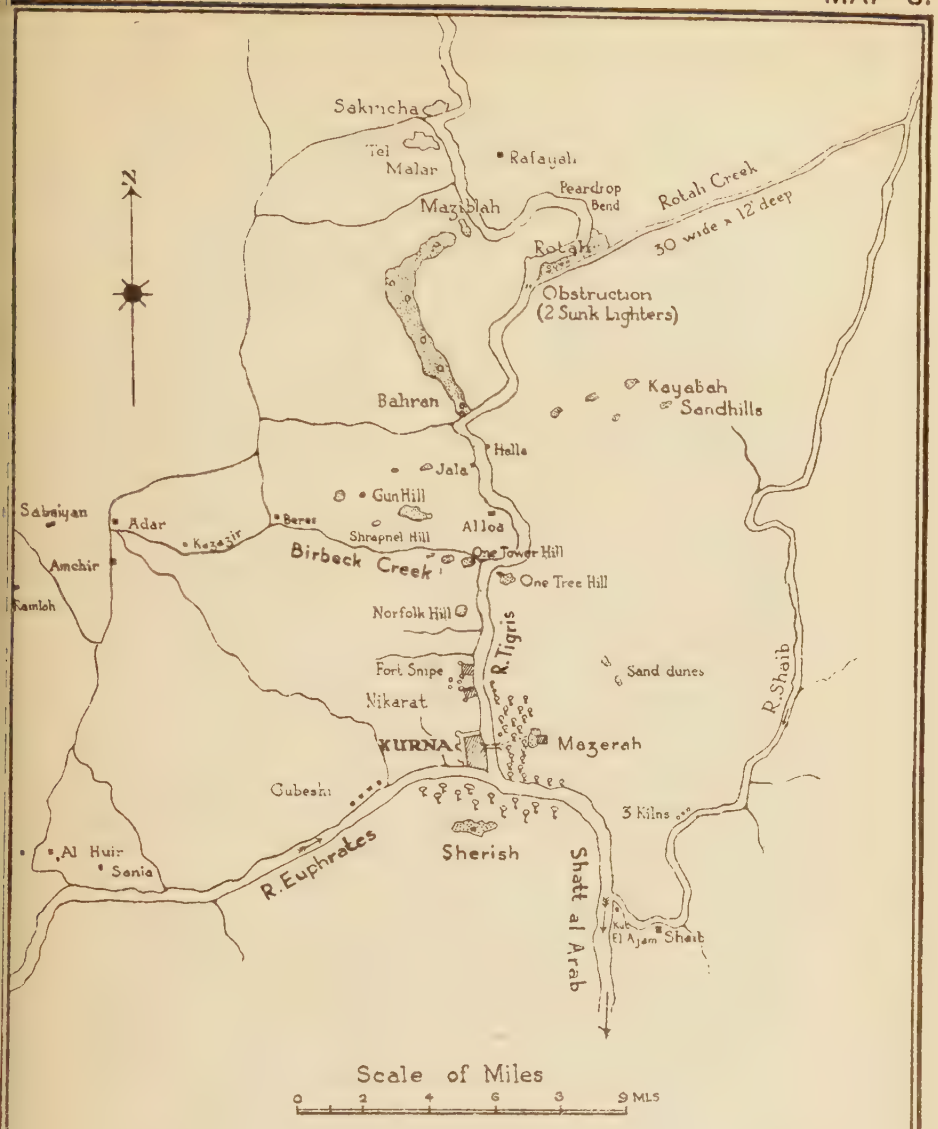
THE operation orders and supplementary instructions were far more lengthy than I could have wished, but I found it impossible to make them shorter owing to the amphibious nature of my force. I found it desirable also to issue these orders a good twenty-four hours in advance of the operation, so as to enable the commanding officers of land and sea units thoroughly to grasp them and to talk them over amongst themselves.

By the afternoon of 29th May I had grouped or distributed the force ready for fighting. The 17th Brigade was in camp at Kurna, ready for their advance, in boats or bellums along the right bank of the Tigris; the 22nd Punjabis were at Mazera village ready for their advance along the left bank. Both these forces were in oases of palm trees.

No. 1 Group (16th Infantry Brigade), in ships, lay off Mazera in the Shatt-el-Arab.

No. 2 Group (General Reserve), in ships anchored at the tail of No. 1 Group, were lying in the Shatt-el-Arab.

No. 3 Group (divisional artillery) were in barges moored along the quay at Kurna.



Sketch map to show Battle of Kurna

Positions above floods are shaded. The remainder of the country shown on this map was under water.

No. 4 Group ships were anchored at the tail of No. 2 Group.

I had directed the S.N.O. to place a guard-boat as rear-guard at the tail of No. 4 Group and another as flank guard in the Euphrates. The mine-sweepers *Shaitan* and *Lewis Pelly* were to precede the advance of the sloops of war on the Tigris, which would keep pace generally with the advance of the 17th Brigade.

The heat was terrific, and many were the cases of sunstroke amongst the troops, especially the British; and on the 29th May I began to fear that the troops would succumb to the heat wholesale.

I was much worried in my mind over the absence of the 18th Infantry Brigade, of which I had endeavoured to obtain the recall from Kurna.[1] I felt that it should have been united to the division at least for the battle. Basra was only about thirty miles away, and there would have been no danger whatever in leaving Fort St. George for a week. By reason of the floods, and consequent strength of their position, I had every reason to expect an obstinate resistance from the Turks in the coming battle, with, probably, heavy losses inflicted upon troops. If such had been the case, the lack of the 18th Infantry Brigade might well have cost me dearly. But, fortunately for me, incompetency and want of courage in the Turkish commander gave me an easy victory.

1 Though I had no bellums for this brigade, I might have been able to put them ashore at Bahran by means of the ships, if I could have made good that locality.

On the afternoon of the 30th I climbed the observation tower and had another look at the position I had to attack. Everything was ready for the morrow. I looked over the tops of the palm trees to the north and saw a great sea with small yellow islands here and there, which were redoubts occupied by the Turks. I could see other redoubts at Bahran, men moving about, and the masts of the dhows at Maziblah. I still felt disturbed by my inability to make a turning movement of any kind. My attack had of necessity to be purely frontal, and so it was ripe for defeat. Only with difficulty—by taking One Tree Hill on the left bank with the 22nd Punjabis—could I bring a flank fire to bear on Norfolk Hill on the right bank, and thus prepare the capture of the first objective. Afterwards an energetic effort from Norfolk Hill ought to give me the curtain constituted by Two Gun Hill and One Tower Hill, which was that of the enemy's main line of resistance at Bahran.

No one felt exactly comfortable about the mines said to be strewn in the river, and I could see the Senior Naval Officer, the able and gallant Captain Nunn, also felt somewhat uncertain when I said that I wanted the warships to keep pace with the advancing infantry in the "bellums." I considered that the fire from the warships laid on to Norfolk Hill, Two Gun Hill, and One Tower Hill, would greatly assist the infantry advance as it approached the enemy—would, in fact, make that advance possible. (This proved to be the case.) The main position at Bahran would be the tough nut to crack on the second day of

the battle; I should probably have heavy losses here, and, as I continued my vigil from my lofty perch on the observation tower, I got no comfort from the outlook.

Supposing the attack of the 17th Brigade were repulsed! It would be a veritable disaster, for it would be almost impossible for it to retreat. The labour of pulling and pushing and punting the bellums through the thick reeds was immense, and progress painfully slow. All the wounded would be drowned, practically all the boats armed would be lost, sunk, abandoned, or taken. But on the other hand even if I had 20,000 men I could not take the Turkish positions without bellums, and there were only sufficient for one brigade. It was impossible for the infantry to wade, for in many places the water was out of their depth and the different channels to cross were very deep. The warships could not defeat the Turks alone. The channel of the Tigris was mined, and the redoubts with their guns, though they were only field guns, should not find it difficult to sink the *Espiègle, Odin* and *Clio,* whose armour was practically useless. Fifty years old, these sloops were used to stop the slave traffic on the West Coast of Africa or in the Persian Gulf; a single shell from a field gun below the water-line would sink them. In fact, the whole battle depended upon the successful advance of the 17th Infantry Brigade.

As I descended the ladders of the observation tower I thought that surely no leader had been called on to fight such an extraordinary battle as was I, in

this first command of mine as a general in war. Nor was it comforting to know that the commanding officers of the 17th Brigade had little or no confidence in the "bellum business," and viewed the whole operation with the greatest concern.

Had the Turks stood resolutely to their guns I think we must have suffered a real disaster, such as Pakenham at New Orleans, for example. I could not foresee their precipitate and extraordinary retreat, after I had taken the curtain to their main line of resistance, which was what happened in the battle. I knew that Captain Nunn was anxious about the target his ships would make in the Tigris channel for the guns in the Turkish redoubts. How could they help hitting the warships, moving slowly in single file along the river channel, conspicuous by their great size over the flooded waste?

My thoughts turned repeatedly to the advance of the infantry in their flimsy bellums, struggling through deep water thick with reeds, in order to close with redoubts pumping shrapnel on them, and I felt rather like a prize-fighter just before a doubtful battle—longing for it to begin. To Whitmore, my servant, who had been with me fourteen years, I said that night that I felt anxious. He replied: "It's all right, sir; you'll have the Townshend luck all right!" Though his words were absurd they gave me comfort; but I don't think anyone else in the command had the slightest idea how anxious I was.

I had decided to make H.M.S. *Espiègle,* the flagship, my headquarters for the battle; not only could

I get an excellent view and perfect control from the forecastle, but the sloop being a full-rigged ship in the old style, I could climb up into the foretop and see far and wide if I wished to do so.

Before going on board the *Espiègle* that night, I went round the whole fleet in my steam launch, stopping here and there at the different headquarters of groups or brigades. Everyone was ready. I dined with Captain Nunn and lay down in my cabin dressed, as the next day would begin early and be an exciting one for me.

I was up before dawn on 31st May, and at 6 a. m. the *Espiègle* began to glide slowly up stream through the bridge of boats, which had been opened, and through the broken boom. We anchored up stream of Fort Snipe. I could see from the foretop of the *Espiègle* that Blois Johnson's advance with the 22nd Punjabis in order to turn the position of Norfolk Hill was in full swing on the left bank. Our heavy guns at Kurna began their bombardment of the Turkish curtain position on time. They were supporting the advance of the 17th Infantry Brigade, which now set off in its bellums—and an extraordinary sight it was. To the eastward Blois Johnson's troops were advancing on a wide extent of front and enveloping One Tree Hill. They carried the place with slight loss—advancing at the double as they got within 400 or 500 yards of it, and under a straggly fire from the irregular Arab riflemen, who constituted the hill's defenders.

A few shrapnel burst near the *Espiègle*. We were

being fired at from the forts. One or two shells fell into the water alongside the ship, and she was struck once or twice. I came down to the deck as we got under way to keep pace with the slow advance of the 17th Brigade in the bellums. We were preceded by the *Shaitan* and the *Lewis Pelly,* armed tugs, which were mine-sweeping. The *Espiègle* had opened fire with her 4.7 gun from the forecastle, and all guns, land and sea, were now turned on Norfolk Hill, which at a range of some 2,500 yards—the ideal range for the howitzer battery, which was at Nakhailat village—was literally smothered with fire. The reply of One Tower Hill and Two Gun Hill was most feeble. All distances were known to a yard by our gunners, who had been long exchanging shots with Turkish redoubts.

I expected to see the *Shaitan* or *Lewis Pelly,* which were steaming ahead boldly with a chain between them to rake up the mines, blown up at any moment; but nothing happened, and one began to think that there could be no mines at all, and that the stories of the German experts with their lighter-full of mines was all a bluff! The truth of the matter, we found afterwards, was that there were plenty, but they were not contact mines, and had to be fired by means of a key on an electric switch. They did not explode as we went over them because the connection had been so long in the water as to become damp. One mine did explode just astern of the *Odin* which was following close behind the *Espiègle*—and we had already passed over it.

As the 17th Infantry Brigade advanced painfully through the thick reeds, we kept pace with them in the *Espiègle*. The fire of our guns, continually shortening their range, kept the guns in the Turkish redoubts silent. All gun fire was switched on to Two Gun Hill and One Tower Hill as the Oxfords left their bellums and rushed Norfolk Hill with the bayonet. Captain Brooke, the first man into the redoubt, was shot dead at the head of his company. But Norfolk Hill fell into our possession with very little loss. The attack struggled onward against the remaining works of the enemy's curtain—Two Gun Hill and One Tower Hill—as I signalled to Climo my congratulations on the brilliant dash of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry.

The resistance of One Tower Hill and Two Gun Hill to our attack was feeble in the extreme; in fact, it can hardly be called a resistance. The artillery, land and sea, were all over these two redoubts, which hardly replied. The 4.7 guns of the Naval Flotilla had an especially devastating effect upon them. Soon the white flag appeared on Two Gun Hill, as the 103rd Light Infantry approached it; and by 11.30 the Oxfords had taken One Tower Hill. Thus the first objectives of the battle—the curtain formed by Norfolk Hill, Two Gun Hill, and One Tower Hill and the line of the Birbeck Creek—was in my hands.

At One Tower Hill I found the redoubt knocked to pieces. A Krupp field-gun and a Turkish lieutenant of artillery were there, the garrison having fled.

The heat was now very great, and the glare of the sun very trying. I got up the whole of the force off the ships on to the reach between Norfolk Hill and Fort Snipe, the head of the convoy being abreast of Norfolk Hill. The 17th Infantry Brigade bivouacked north of the line of the Birbeck Creek, in the "curtain" that it had captured—the 103rd Light Infantry at One Gun Hill; the 119th at the ruined village of Alloa; and the Oxford Light Infantry at One Tower Hill. I issued operation orders to continue the attack at daybreak the next day on the main position at Bahren, by means of a turning movement to the westward by the 17th Brigade against the perpendicular sand ridge which constituted the position, the water to the left (or west) of it being supposed to be shallow. I ordered the 22nd Punjabis, across the river from One Tower Hill, to unite with the 17th Brigade, while the *Espiègle* anchored just abreast of the deep Birbeck Creek. The enemy's guns did not fire upon us, but when the minesweepers turned the bend in the Tigris just north of the Birbeck Creek they were fired at by the guns at Bahran and immediately returned. Every precaution was taken to prevent mines being floated down in the night. So far we had suffered insignificant losses, but I anticipated difficulty with the second phase of the battle. I expected a vigorous resistance at Bahran, and I could not foresee the flight of the Turks in the night.

Several mines were discovered and exploded at

One Tower Hill, and the naval people discovered some more in the river. On a little sand island about twenty yards square, which lay some seven hundred yards to the north-west, was discovered the electric keyboard for exploding all the observation mines in the river. It was in charge of an elderly Turkish Naval Officer, who had been unable to get any of the mines to explode. When he was brought before me on the forecastle of the *Espiègle* I invited him to proceed straightway into the *Lewis Pelly* mine-sweeper and point out all the mines remaining in the river. We expected plenty of them in our further approach to Bahran. This he did with a quiet cheerfulness I was much struck with, and I was told afterwards that when perched in the bow of the mine-sweeper he was of the greatest use, and was most alert and vigilant on his post. We were all very nervous about these mines, and it was amusing in a way to see how the officers and soldiers moved over the sand hills stepping delicately as Agag. No one could be induced to pick up an old hat or an abandoned water-bottle!

Although the bellums had enabled the infantry to carry out the operation of crossing the floods and thick reeds and taking the redoubts, the armoured ones proved an utter failure when it came to a long advance through such a thickness of reeds. They were also badly left by the light unarmoured bellums even in open water. During the first part of the advance, they had kept back the remainder so long

that the second and third companies of the Oxfords passed through them, and the armoured bellums came on at the tail of the battalion as a general reserve.

The progress of the attack, I may add, was slow to a maddening degree. For example, though the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry on the left flank were very little fired at from the redoubt (Two Gun Hill) on which they were advancing, and though the garrison were waving white flags half an hour before they got there, it was late in the afternoon before the redoubt, with its 300 unwounded prisoners and two field-guns, was in the actual possession of the 103rd. It was fortunate for us that these people were so ready to surrender, for Two Gun Hill was out of range of our howitzers at Nakhailat village, and at longish range from the other guns. Hence only two or three of the garrison of Two Gun Hill were wounded and none killed, whilst at Norfolk Hill and One Tower Hill—the former especially—the trenches were found full of corpses.

The night passed in quiet as regards the enemy, and in great vigilance on our part, especially as regarded the security of the flotilla. Early in the evening I dictated my operation orders for the next day's attack on the Turkish main line of resistance. Very brief orders were sufficient, as it was merely a case of continuing the movement with the 17th Brigade (reinforced by the 22nd Punjabis, who had been brought to Tower Hill from One Tree Hill across the river) against the Bahran position in exactly the same way and with the same procedure as in the first phase.

The 17th Brigade were disposed in the same way. The 103rd Light Infantry would be on the extreme left flank with the 119th, and would make a wide turning movement against Maziblah and the perpendicular line of sand hills running north from Bahran; while the Oxfords, supported by the 22nd Punjabis, would carry out a frontal attack on Bahran. The land attack was to be supported by the fire of constantly advancing warships and the river section of our artillery. I closed up the 16th Brigade in their ships to be ready to land them at Bahran once the Oxfords got a footing there, if the Turks continued resistance at that stage of the attack. The 17th Brigade spent the night in dismantling the armoured bellums.

In the early grey of 1st June we opened fire with all the artillery, including the warships, on the south end of the Bahran ridge, taking the Turkish gun emplacements as the targets in order to sweep the road for the 17th Brigade.

The scattered position of their bivouacs, and the thickness of the reeds, delayed the advance of the 17th Brigade, which had assembled to begin with to the north of Two Gun Hill. As we got under way in the *Espiègle,* leading the ships and always preceded by the two mine-sweepers, I noticed that the enemy's guns were strangely silent, and I could see from the forecastle of the *Espiègle* the 17th Brigade pushing its way laboriously forward. I learnt afterwards that the reeds were so thick on their line of advance that the heavy machine-gun rafts had to be left

behind. Thus the act of dismounting the armoured protection of the bellums was absolutely necessary and justified.

Not a shot was fired, not a gun opened on us as the *Espiègle* rounded the bend of the Tigris east of the Birbeck Creek, and in astonished silence we continued to approach Bahran. An aeroplane approached (for three aeroplanes had arrived from Basra and Kurna at daybreak and had proceeded to reconnoitre), and, hailing the *Espiègle,* threw down a message which said that the enemy had abandoned Bahran and were in full flight northward. (This was the first appearance of aircraft in Mesopotamia.)

The troops of the 17th Brigade accordingly occupied Bahran. A half-company pushed to the northern end of the ridge and fired on the last boat-load of Turks, who were shoving off to embark in their transports at Maziblah. It now became a question of a vigorous and rapid pursuit by the naval flotilla on Amarah. I ordered the G.S.O., I, of the division to assemble troops and transports at Bahran whilst I went on in a steam launch with Captain Nunn, S.N.O., to the mouth of the Rotah Creek to see if the obstruction of the sunken iron lighter, so often reported, really closed the channel, as this might delay my pursuit for as much as two or three days. We found that the sunken lighter luckily only blocked half the channel. There was room even for the large sloops of war to pass to the left of it. Working in water up to the waist and using hatchets, the crew of the launch managed to cut a number of

mine cables at this spot, and we then returned to Bahran and the *Espiègle,* where I dictated my operation orders for the pursuit as follows:—

6TH DIVISION ORDER NO. 19

1. The G.O.C. intends to push on to Ezra's Tomb.

2. The 16th Brigade will disembark at once with kits, tents and 10 days' rations.

3. G.O.C. 16th Brigade will send a battalion to Maziblah to-day. Remainder of 16th Brigade will remain at Bahran and will be sent for when ships are available at Ezra's Tomb, the transports carrying the 17th Brigade being sent back for that purpose.

3. 30th Mountain Battery will remain at Bahran under G.O.C. 16th Brigade.

4. 17th Brigade and half No. 22 Co. S. & M. will embark on *Blosse Lynch, Mejidieh* and *P. 1* as soon as 16th Brigade has disembarked, taking on balance of rations.

P. 2 will accompany above ships.

5. Norfolk Regiment on *P. 3* accompany 17th Brigade.

6. River section Artillery—less 18-pr., which remains temporarily at Bahran—accompany 17th Brigade.

63rd Battery, R.F.A., is grouped with 17th Brigade in ships as at present.

7. Order of March for Transport to be issued by G.O.C. 17th Brigade.

CHAPTER V

THE PURSUIT: OCCUPATION OF AMARAH

I SAW Sir John Nixon at Bahran before I left. He had come up on his steamer from Kurna, and I told him that I should press on in pursuit in the naval flotilla. I informed him of the orders I had issued, and stated that I hoped to enter Amarah with the Turkish fugitives, thus giving them no breathing time to rally and organise resistance there.

The naval flotilla took up the pursuit, the little *Shaitan,* commanded by Lieut. Singleton, R.N., leading, followed by the *Espiègle, Clio,* and *Odin,* sloops of war, and the *Lewis Pelly* and *Samana* tugs. I had remained on board the *Espiègle.* At 5.30 p. m. our two bow 4.7 guns on board the *Espiègle* began to shell the Turkish steamer *Mosul* and the Turkish gunboat *Marmarice,* which we were overhauling, at a range of some 8,000 yards; but, though we hit the *Mosul*—hulling her two or three times—we had not damaged her vitally when darkness fell, and we found ourselves close to Ezra's Tomb, about twenty miles from the scene of action that morning. There we captured three large lighters full of munitions, and from 200 to 300 Turkish officers and men of the gen-

darmerie, three field guns and a lighter containing mines.

At Ezra's Tomb I left Colonel Gamble, my G.S.O., I, and other Staff officers, with orders to unite the Division there and send them on to Amarah by echelons of brigades, as rapidly as possible after me. At 2 a. m., when the moon rose, I continued the pursuit in the *Espiègle,* taking only Captain Peel of my staff and Captain Bastow, my A.D.C., with me. During the previous afternoon we had run aground two or three times in the sharp bends of the river, which sometimes left little room for the *Espiègle* to turn, with her length of between 150 and 200 feet and her draught of nine or ten feet. She steered by the old-fashioned hand-wheel between decks, and all the time one heard the voice of the navigating officer from the bridge: "Two turns starboard," or "Two turns port," and the answering sing-song of the quartermaster between decks as he put the wheel over, assisted by another seaman: "Two turns starboard, Sir." This all took time, and the action was not quick enough for quick steering in the narrow, serpentine river which the Tigris had become in the great belt of marshes between Bahran and Amarah. We got off very quickly on every occasion, and as the marshes were soft no harm was done. It seemed to me wonderful that large ships like the *Espiègle, Odin* and *Clio* were navigated at all so high up the Tigris. They had a very imposing and curious effect as they steamed across the immense marshes in the region of Ezra's Tomb. With their rigging and

spars they looked more like great full-rigged sailing-ships than steamers. They must have made a great impression on the Arabs.

At 4.20 in the morning we were again shelling the *Marmarice,* which appeared to be on fire and was lying on her side. The *Clio* astern of us had been shelling her vigorously from a bend in the river before that hour. About this time the *Espiègle* grounded, and it was found we could proceed no further owing to the shallowness of the water, which was apparently also the reason why the *Marmarice* was aground. Nunn and I pulled off in a boat to the *Marmarice,* which had been abandoned by her crew. Two large iron lighters full of rifle ammunition and equipment were alongside her. She was on fire, and we did not dare board her, owing to the heat of the flames and fear of her magazine exploding. The Arabs from the marshes, who are well armed with rifles and known as great scoundrels and even murderers, had been busy looting rifles and ammunition out of the lighters before we arrived. Some wounded Turkish soldiers whom we found there said the Arabs had taken a large number of rifles and much ammunition and had murdered many of the Turks, who had fled into the marshes when the lighters had been cast off. Captain Nunn and I now got on board the armed despatch steamer *Comet,* and continued the pursuit with the light gunboats, leaving the heavy sloops *Espiègle, Clio* and *Odin* some seven miles north of Ezra's Tomb. We found the Turkish river-steamer *Mosul* about two miles ahead of the *Marmarice* tied

to the bank with the white flag flying. She had several officers—mostly Turkish medical officers—and a company of infantry on board, with some wounded. They were all very glad to surrender, and were in mortal fear of the Arabs. I noticed that our shells had damaged her upper works, but her hull was all right. At 11 a. m. we continued the pursuit, and at 2.15 p. m. we were in sight of Kila Salih. We had left the marsh country and had entered one of green grass-covered plain as flat as a billiard-table. An army might have manœuvred with ease on either side of the river as far as Amarah. The climate seemed changed from the awful, damp, unbearable heat of the marsh country from Kurna to Ezra's Tomb. It was still very hot, but the atmosphere was much drier. All the Arab villages were displaying white flags, and men, women and children salaamed to us from the banks as we steamed past. This is always the way with the Arab—the greatest turncoat in the world; he will always salaam to those he thinks are winning.

The *Comet* arrived at Kila Salih at 3.20 p. m., after we had dispersed with our fire a few cavalry and a company of infantry outside the place. They came out on our approach and galloped off after receiving a few shells from the 12-pounder on the forecastle of the *Comet*. Kila Salih seemed a town as large as Kurna. There was a great display of white flags on all the houses. The Sheikh, or head man, came on board the *Comet*, and I ordered him to collect supplies for 15,000 men, for which I would pay.

I said that the 15,000 were on my heels and would arrive shortly, hoping that, as is the Arab custom, he would send on the news to the Turks at Amarah by a camel-man directly I had left. I thought that such information might dissuade the Turks from further resistance, and induce them to abandon Amarah and to continue their retreat northward.[1] We pushed on in the *Comet* till dark, and then tied up to the bank, the *Shaitan* being ahead of us and close by. Several Arabs from villages came alongside on the bank and told us that Turkish troops were at Amarah.

At 5 a.m. on 3rd June we got under way and steamed on towards Amarah, all villages flying white flags and men, women, and children working in the fields waving their hands to us. I halted at Abu Sidrah. We were only twelve miles from Amarah. My first idea was to wait until my leading brigade should arrive in ships, as the probability was that the Turkish troops at Amarah would defend the town. Indeed I felt certain that they would fight, and that it would be ridiculous to attempt to take the place with the armed tug *Shaitan,* with a three-pounder gun and some ten hands as a crew, and the *Comet,* a small paddle-wheel river-steamer, armed with a twelve-pounder and a total crew of fifteen seamen and British soldiers doing work of marines.

Captain Nunn was anxious that I should go on and chance it—as is the way with sailors. But I said emphatically, "No, I won't do anything foolish. I

[1] This ruse paid me well.

must unite some troops before attacking, for there is *sure* to be a defence." But, after waiting for about an hour, I told Nunn that after all I would go on and chance it. I told him to send the *Shaitan* about two miles ahead as an advanced guard; and we followed with the *Comet, Samana,* and *Lewis Pelly,* armed tug-boats, and three 4.7 guns towed in horse-boats.

The *Shaitan,* we saw, continued past Amarah in pursuit of a Turkish steamer. At 1.30 p. m. I was alongside the custom house at Amarah, where the Turkish commander in the battle at Kurna, Halim Bey, the Governor of Amarah, Aziz Bey, three or four colonels and some 30 or 40 officers came on board to surrender. A whole battalion of the Turkish *pompiers* from Constantinople[2] sent off word that they were ready to surrender at the barracks; so I told Nunn to send one of his naval officers. (Two lieutenants were on board the *Comet.*) Accordingly he sent a lieutenant with the coxswain of the boat and a British soldier from the Dorsets, who, I think, was acting as a marine. *These three received the surrender of the battalion* and marched them down to the quay and on board one of the big iron lighters there, as I wanted them in the lighter and anchored in mid stream under our guns! It must be remembered that I had only about twenty-five British sailors and soldiers with me.

[2] This was one of two Turkish fire-brigade battalions, which had been sent from Constantinople as a reinforcement to Halim Bey, who commanded the 38th Division.

To keep up appearances, I made a scene with the Governor, who said he had no supplies available. I spoke of the 15,000 troops close on my heels with a fleet of ships. He said he had plenty of Turkish biscuits. I accepted this grumblingly, and insisted on sheep being collected at once.

We heard the *Shaitan's* gun firing, and thought she was firing on the troops who had fled from Amarah before we arrived; but on her return at dusk, I found that she had shelled the advanced guard of Daghistani's force, which was retreating on Amarah from Halfiyah, as the approach of a detachment from Gorringe's force, which had been operating from Ahwaz, was forcing them to retire. Apparently they were in ignorance of my occupation of Amarah. On the *Shaitan* opening fire on this advanced guard, which was marching along the Musharrah canal north-east of the town, it at once dispersed and fled across the desert, apparently with the object of hitting off a bend in the Tigris further north. It was followed by what seemed to be the main column. All this was hidden from our view by the town of Amarah, which was between us and this hostile force.

The night of 3rd June passed quickly. A Turkish Engineer Officer dined with Nunn and myself. He spoke French—like many of the Turkish officers—and was loud in his contempt for Halim Bey. Another guest at dinner was the Turkish Naval Engineer Officer of the *Marmarice*. He talked English well. I discovered his accomplishment *after* a conversation in his presence between

Nunn and myself, in which I told Nunn that I must have all the Turkish prisoners anchored close under our guns, so that we could sink them at once, supposing they guessed my real numbers and tried to escape, which they could easily have done. I kept my friend the Turkish Naval Engineer by my side until the arrival of the Norfolks!

The next morning, 4th June, the Arabs of the town started to loot the residences of the Turkish officials, hospitals, food supply depots, etc. I had no picquets to land and deal with this disorder. The Arabs were removing furniture, carpets, beds, blankets, and so forth, from Government houses and the hospital, and were working like ants on the river front. What was happening inside the town I could not see, but we could hear scattered rifle shots. It was necessary to check this disorder at once; so I ordered the machine gun on the bridge of the *Comet* to open fire on the Arabs looting the main hospital on the river front. Three or four were quickly bowled over, and the crowd fled, falling over each other and dropping their bundles. Affairs remained quiet along the river front, but the firing in the town increased. The Arabs had quickly learnt how few we were, and realised that, with the seven or eight hundred prisoners I had, I could not spare a man to land. I was very glad when at last I heard that the steamers were in sight. The Norfolks arrived in the forenoon; and there was no trouble after that.

By the evening of 5th or 6th June, I had united all my troops at Amarah. General Nixon and the

Headquarter Staff also arrived on his steamer, and he warmly congratulated me on the success of the operation, in which I had succeeded without having a butcher-bill.

It has always struck me that no one, except myself and the officers and men composing the 17th Brigade and the Naval officers, seems to have recognised the difficulty of the operation and the possibility of a disaster. Had I been a couple of hours later in my arrival at Amarah there would have been an organised resistance. It was the report sent on by the Sheikh of Kila Salih that I had demanded food for 15,000 troops, which had decided Halim Bey and all his officers and men to surrender. Those who would not agree continued their flight up river.

Having taken Amarah, my first step was to unite the whole of my division at that point, including the 18th Infantry Brigade, which was still at Fort St. George, west of Basra, guarding the avenue of approach from Nasiriyeh, where the main Turkish force had rallied after their retreat at the Battle of Shaiba. Sir John Nixon now contemplated the taking of Nasiriyeh, utilising my 18th Brigade to reinforce the weak 12th Division commanded by General Gorringe, which, as I have said, possessed no field artillery; after Nasiriyeh was taken I was to get back the 18th Brigade and advance from Amarah to take Kut-al-Amara, which is an important strategic point, both from its trade and its position at the junction of the Tigris and the Hai, the river which connects Kut and Nasiriyeh.

The situation on the Tigris after our occupation of Amarah was as follows:—

According to our Headquarters Intelligence information, the Turkish forces on the Tigris Line, or which could be brought on to it, were believed to be:—

At Baghdad.
1 Turkish regular battalion.
2 Reserve battalions of inferior material.
No guns.

At Kut.
1 Turkish regular battalion, which fought at Shaiba.
4 Arab battalions, which fought at Shaiba.
2 newly-raised battalions of inferior material from Baghdad.
12 guns which fought at Shaiba.

In retirement between Kut and Amarah—
Remnants of Halim Bey's force from Kurna.
Remnants of Daghistani's force from Arabistan.
Remnants of 2 Fire-Brigade Battalions not taken at Amarah, 3rd June.

These forces were not sufficiently numerous to be formidable, and a considerable portion of them were known to be in a disorganised state and deficient of artillery. Practically the whole of the artillery with

Halim Bey's force had been accounted for, and it was improbable that Daghistani could have taken his artillery with him in his rapid retreat by a detour through the desert. It seemed not unlikely that most of his guns had been thrown into the marshes or abandoned near Halfiyah, as it was his advanced guard only which reached Amarah—and then found themselves cut off by the 6th Division. His guns were all behind on 3rd June.

The reinforcements which the Turks might receive from Anatolia or the Caucasus, it was said, had to make a long and trying march of several weeks to reach Baghdad. Moreover, it was pointed out that it was extremely unlikely that any efficient formations could be spared from the main Turkish forces in either direction, and no reliable confirmation had been received by our Intelligence of the despatch of any such reinforcements to Baghdad. Our Intelligence Department had agents in that city, and so could rely on getting timely information of the arrival of large numbers of troops there.

It was consequently the view of the Headquarter Staff of the Force in Mesopotamia that though a new Commander, Nureddin Bey, had reached Baghdad from Constantinople, it would be beyond his powers, no matter what his ability might be (for he was reported to be an able officer), to make an effective attack with his present resources on my two brigades of the 6th Division in and near Amarah, supported by heavy artillery and Naval guns, and now provided with aeroplanes, wireless telegraphy, etc. I had an

efficient Naval force to rely on, while such steamers as the Turks still had on the Upper Tigris were known to be deficient in coal, oil, and stores of every description.

Our communications with Kurna were constantly interrupted by the marsh Arabs, who cut the telegraph line between Kila Salih and Ezra's Tomb, and this state of affairs called for immediate punishment by Line of Communication troops, or payments to the marsh Arabs by our political department.

Sir John Nixon asked me to send in my views on the quartering of my division at Amarah prior to my advance in September against Kut-al-Amara. I proposed an advanced mixed detachment of security of two companies some 40 to 50 miles—one or two days' steaming—north of Amarah on the Tigris, there to install an aviation landing ground as a base for reconnaissances on Kut-al-Amara; the bulk of the division to remain united at Amarah, entrenched lightly on the right bank of the Tigris opposite the town, which would remain tranquil under the menace of our guns. The Arab population of Amarah was decidedly hostile to us and friendly to the Turks, and I considered that it was most undesirable to have my troops quartered in the narrow streets and lanes of the town.

I suggested that a small detachment of security be installed at Halfiyah, some 16 miles south-east of Amarah on the Musharrah Canal, because it seemed of importance and controlled a route to Ahwaz, by which Amarah could be turned; this detachment

could be united to the division at Amarah in a few hours by steamer. I proposed also to have a detachment of one company at Kila Salih, twenty miles south of Amarah. This is an important town, but, as I had failed to get Headquarters to hold it by line of communication troops, I cut its garrison down to a bedrock minimum. It was like getting blood out of a stone to ask Headquarters to supply line of communication troops for their legitimate work. They had none to give me. To use first-line troops for line of communication work is an absolute violation of the principle of Economy of Force. In Mesopotamia, where we had to make bricks without straw, line of communication troops were invariably improvised out of the first-line troops. I was to find this custom a most serious danger in my advance beyond Amarah.

I asked for six months' reserve of supplies to be placed at Amarah, and for a supply of gun and rifle ammunition in proportion, i.e., 1,000 rounds per rifle and 500 per gun. It is a commonly accepted principle of war that any isolated force which may have to hold its own unaided—as mine might well have to do—should be able to last out for a period of six months.

I said that if Nureddin advanced against me at Amarah, I should take the offensive as soon as he arrived within a day's march. I intended that my action should be the "defensive-offensive." I was going to hold Amarah with a minimum force, which would be entrenched on the opposite bank of the

town, and manœuvre against the bulk of Nureddin's force with my Principal Mass.

Sir John Nixon approved of my idea of keeping the bulk of the force together as a striking force.

He approved of a double company being posted forty to fifty miles above Amarah on the Tigris to cover an aviation landing ground.

He was not convinced of the necessity of a detachment at Halfiyah.

He approved of the post and detachment for Kila Salih.

With regard to the garrison of Amarah, my proposal to place it mainly on the right bank and thus to avoid the town, he said appeared to contemplate danger from the town and its inhabitants, and he did not share my view. He was of opinion that, in order to keep the town secure and to maintain the continuance of trade, it was necessary for the force left in Amarah after the withdrawal of the striking force, to be quartered on the same side of the river as the town, with such bridge-heads as might seem desirable. He also considered it advisable to make use of the excellent arsenals, stores, etc., already in existence in the town, and he was adverse to placing our advanced depots on the right bank, where there were not suitable buildings or wharfage accommodation.

As regarded the location of my "Striking Force," he advised me to consult my Assistant Director of Medical Services before I moved my British troops from buildings during the summer, but otherwise he

was prepared to accept any arrangements for the location of the rest which I thought fit. He was, however, averse to putting troops into tents or huts while buildings were available.

My request for six months' reserve of supplies seemed to him to be based on a misapprehension of the authorised arrangements for supply in the force under his command. Six weeks' reserve was the total amount for the Mesopotamian Army, as authorised and supplied by Headquarters in India. For good reasons, such reserve was unlikely to be increased.

I should be made up to this and kept supplied by the Indian General Command with such reserves as the Army Commander considered necessary from time to time, and for the present my reserve would not be less than one month, exclusive of local supplies.

The amount of gun and rifle ammunition in Divisional charge would be the amount authorised by Regulations to be in the hands of troops, plus that authorised in Divisional Ammunition Column.

A further stock would be in charge of the Ordnance Advanced Depot on the line of communications, which would be located at Amarah. The Indian General Command was responsible, he said, for keeping the stock in this depot up to the amount fixed from time to time by the Army Commander, and ample ammunition for all emergencies would be available for me.

I give a copy of my reply:—

No. 28/2 (G.S.),
HEADQUARTERS, 6TH DIVISION,
Amarah, 6th June, 1915.

To

The Major-General, General Staff,
Army Head-Quarters.

Memorandum.

Your 139.113-0.

2. Para. 1 noted.

3. Your para. 2 noted—I am proceeding to-morrow or the day after to select it.

4. Your para. 3. I willingly give up the idea of this detachment, since all detachments are undesirable —but from the fact that the Turks held on to it so long, and it is of certain importance as regards Halfiyah and Ahwaz, etc., and local Arab influence, I judged it important enough to have a detachment which could be united to the Division in a day.

5. Your para. 5. The Army Commander's orders, of course, will be obeyed, but I must say that in case I have to take away my striking force and leave a battalion alone here, I do consider, and nothing will alter my opinion, that there would be great danger to the battalion in the town amongst the Arabs, with a large force of Turks coming down to attack us. The town is held in respect by our guns on the west bank.

I am quite aware of the advantage of using the excellent Turkish magazines, which are, however, on the wrong side of the river, and I could easily have

taken the town, had I had to fight for it, by attacking it from the west bank with my troops whilst the gunboats attacked by water.

6. Your para. 6. I did not propose to order British units from their buildings during the present season.

7. Your para. 7. I naturally have to consider the position of an isolated weak Division at Amarah from a purely tactical point of view—to leave a force up here with only 6 *weeks'* reserve I do not consider sound—6 *months'* is the commonly accepted principle for any force which might possibly be isolated and have to hold its own unaided. This is why I said 6 months.

If I only get one month from you I shall purchase supplies and store them up.[3] For example, the I.G.C. would not be able to help me much if you get repulsed at Nasiriyeh whilst I am menaced from Baghdad and the marsh Arabs are between us. Directly you go for Nasiriyeh, Nureddin Pacha, unless an absolute fool, will move forward and menace me from Baghdad. That is certain.

As regards ammunition, I asked for 1,000 rounds per rifle and 500 rounds per gun for the same reason as I did for six months' reserve of supplies, and I do not think "regulations" should come into the question.

I note what you say *re* the Ordnance Advanced Depot at Amarah.

[3] This I proceeded to do, and these supplies were eventually magazined in Kut-al-Amara.

8. I will order my staff to prepare a reply to your 139/111-0 in a concrete form based on my project of operations, and will send it to you in a couple of days, as some details regarding bridging are involved.

C. V. F. Townshend,
Major-General,
Commanding 6th Indian Division.

I then proceeded on a reconnaissance some forty miles up the Tigris, and General Nixon returned to Basra to push on the preparations for taking Nasiriyeh, an operation which was to be undertaken by General Gorringe, my 18th Brigade, and all the field artillery of my division being borrowed for the operation. I found that my artillery, together with my Sappers and Miners, was continually being taken away from me for operations in the Euphrates or Karun Valleys. In my opinion this was just as grave a defect in our organisation as the want of land and river transport, medical stores, etc., so severely censured by the Mesopotamian Commission.

Such was the operation of the taking of Amarah on 3rd June. So great was the heat and unhealthy the climate that between eleven and twelve hundred men were on the sick list ten days after we reached Amarah, and I had left large numbers of sick at Kurna in addition.

On returning from my reconnaissance beyond Amarah I had what I thought was a touch of the sun, accompanied by vomiting and diarrhœa. In three

days I was as weak as a child with "relapsing fever." The doctors at Bombay afterwards told me that it was a brand of fever peculiar as a rule to East Africa. I was taken down to Basra, as we had no ice at Amarah. There I saw Sir John Nixon, who had me put on board a hospital ship going to Bombay, in the hope that the change of air would do me good. I engaged to be back in a month, for I had the task before me of advancing from Amarah to take Kut-al-Amara at the beginning of September. It was only my splendid constitution that pulled me through. I had a narrow shave for my life on that voyage, on which Major Simmons, I.M.S., well known as one of the best doctors in the service, and one of the kindest men I have ever met, gave me every comfort and care.

After a week in St. George's Hospital at Bombay, I was taken to Simla, at the request of my friend, Sir James Roberts, I.M.S., and I stayed for a time at his house. Here an operation was performed on me, and I got rid of the fever quickly. Though very weak and hardly able to walk upstairs, I left Simla for Basra at the end of July, having stayed with the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, and seen the Commander-in-Chief, both of whom were very flattering over the Kurna-Amarah operation.

The heat in the train between Lahore and Karachi tired me very much in my weak state, as also did the great heat in the Persian Gulf and the heavy sea there, owing to the monsoon.

During the first week in August I reached Basra again. There I saw Sir John Nixon regarding my advance on Kut-al-Amara, which had been decided on by Government while I was at Simla.

PART II

KUT

CHAPTER VI

THE ADVANCE FROM AMARAH AGAINST KUT-AL-AMARA

AT Simla, on 7th August, I was passed by a medical board as fit to return to Mesopotamia to resume my command, and I see by my diary that I had gathered that we were to advance on Baghdad. The following letter shows this. It is dated Simla, 8th August, 1915, and was written to a friend of mine then in a high place at the War Office in London:— [1]

"You will be surprised at the address, but I got relapsing fever at Amarah, about 9th June, and was sent on a voyage to Bombay to get well, thence up to the hills to Simla. I passed the medical board yesterday and sail from Karachi on 15th August, to resume my command in Mesopotamia. I have been very ill, but made a rapid recovery, owing, the doctors say, to my good constitution.

"I believe I am to advance from Amarah on Kut-al-Amara directly I get back to my division, my headquarters being Amarah. The question is where are we going to stop in Mesopotamia? I stayed with the Viceroy last month, but could not get anything out of him as regards our policy in Mesopotamia. We

[1] General Sir James Wolfe Murray.

have now got possession of the ancient province of Basra, which is marked out by the various places, Amarah, Nasiriyeh, Basra.

"We have certainly not good enough troops to make *certain* of taking Baghdad, which I hear is being fortified, and guns of position are being mounted there. We can take no risks of a defeat in the East. Imagine a retreat from Baghdad and the consequent instant rising of the Arabs of the whole country behind us, to say nothing of the certain rise in that case of the Persians and probably of the Afghans in consequence, for the Amir is only keeping his country out of the war with difficulty. You can afford to have reverses in France and retreats, witness that from Mons to the Marne; you cannot do that sort of thing in the East and retain prestige.

"Of our two divisions in Mesopotamia, mine, the 6th, is complete; the 12th Division (Gorringe) has no guns! or divisional troops—and Nixon takes them from me and lends them to Gorringe when the latter has to go anywhere.

"I consider we ought to hold what we have got and not advance any more—as long as we are held up, as we undoubtedly are, in the Dardanelles. All these offensive operations in secondary theatres are dreadful errors in strategy; the Dardanelles, Egypt, Mesopotamia, East Africa! I wonder and wonder at such expeditions being permitted in violation of the greatest of all the great fundamental principles of war, especially that of Economy of Force. Such

violation is always punished in history. Every soul should be *united in France,* where the fate of the nations will be decided, and also the fate of all these secondary theatres of the war. I am astounded at the Dardanelles business.

"It is all very well to talk of 1812, regarding the Russian retirement. Napoleon's former central position (1807) at Warsaw, at the confluence of the Narew, Bug, Ukra and Vistula, permits of the German minimum (or secondary) force in that position holding up twice its own numbers; and the Germans will destroy all bridges and railways over a vast region, and thus put all chances of a great Russian advance westward out of the question for a long time to come. It also means that over a million of men (the German Principal Mass on the Russian front) will go now to the Western Theatre to take the French and English by the collar—and I am convinced it will be the French south-eastern flank they will turn or envelop, as that flank is nearest the natural line of retreat of the Allies to their real base—the Loire.

"I think the situation is a very critical one—most grave, and the most comforting thought is that you are having breathing time, time to prepare for the storm. . . .

"I am afraid we are in the cold out here. The Mesopotamian operations are little noticed, though we are fighting the same enemy as you have in the Dardanelles, plus an appalling heat and consequent

sick list (2,400 in hospital when I left Amarah, at the end of June). The hardships in France are nothing to that.

"I have received great praise out here and have established a record in the way of pursuits! I had few casualties in the battle because of the artillery and heavy-gun arrangements (4 inch, 5 inch and 4.7), which completely overwhelmed the enemy's guns, and their infantry could not therefore put up their heads . . ."

As far as I could ascertain by talks with officials at Simla—including Foreign Department ones—the question of the occupation of Kut-al-Amara was still in the balance at the time I wrote that letter, but, in view of the strong representations made by General Nixon and the Government of India, there was very little doubt but that this operation would be sanctioned from home. I was informed by a very important Foreign Department official that he did not think there was any idea at the moment of an advance on Baghdad. He said, indeed, that unless the forces at our disposal were not more than adequate for the purpose, the Foreign Department would very strongly deprecate such a move. He added: "If things eventually go well in the main theatre of the war, Baghdad will be at our mercy to dispose of as we will." It is a pity that the Government of India did not hold to that view.

On 10th August, I lunched with Sir Beauchamp Duff, the Commander-in-Chief, at his house, and had a long talk with him afterwards in his study.

He informed me that it had been decided that probably I should advance to Kut-al-Amara directly I got back to Amarah, i.e., an advance north of another 120 miles. Sir John Nixon had given strong reasons urging this step; but sanction had not yet arrived from England.

I told the Commander-in-Chief that I could guarantee to defeat Nureddin, who was entrenched in a position covering Kut-al-Amara, and to throw him into the Tigris, but I hoped that, with my present force, I should not be ordered to advance against Baghdad. It was not for me, I said, to point out to him the grave risks of continuing the strategic offensive with inadequate forces and with no troops on the Line of Communication behind me—a line between two and three hundred miles long. He fully agreed with me, and said with emphasis: "Not one inch, Townshend, shall you go beyond Kut-al-Amara unless I make you up to adequate strength."

I mentioned that I ought to have fully an army corps to take Baghdad and hold it. He complained that everyone was asking him for troops. He said he had not a single man to give, for at any time we might have Afghanistan and the Frontier on our backs. Persia also was causing trouble and might rise. These, I thought, were more reasons against an advance on Baghdad, but I did not make the remark.

"This news from Warsaw," he said, "is, politically speaking, for us in India, most unfortunate. All the East begins to think that the Germans will win." He agreed with me that the *military* importance of

the Russian retirement was nothing very serious; it was the *political* importance which was doing such harm. Regarding the Persians he said, that, if they did rise, they were on our lines of communication and retreat. "You in Mesopotamia will have to deal with them. I have no one to spare from India."

He reminded me that he had sent 1,000 Territorials to fill up gaps in my division in Mesopotamia. The Chief seemed very much overworked and tired, and I advised him to take week-ends in the hills beyond Simla with different air and rest. He replied that his work would accumulate too much if he did. "What I want," he said, "is a senior general in whom I have absolute confidence as regards loyalty and ability, who can be a sort of deputy Commander-in-Chief and carry on the work for me at times, while I have a short holiday." But he had no one answering to this description.

I left Simla on 13th August for Karachi, and found it very hot on the plains. I embarked on 16th August, on the *Dumra,* a fast Persian Gulf mail-boat, at Karachi, and sailed in the teeth of a monsoon gale.

On 20th August, we anchored off Bushire. Government had occupied that place with two battalions of Indian Infantry, under Brigadier-General Brooking. There had been fighting some 20 miles east of Bushire. British blue-jackets from H.M.S. *Juno* and some Indian Infantry were landed. The Navy lost 9 killed and 17 wounded—including the commander of the *Juno* killed—whilst the Indian

troops had 50 killed and wounded. The Arabs, they said, had retreated from the passes and palm groves attached.

Sailing from Bushire on the evening of the same day, I arrived at Basra on the 21st, and at once had a long talk with Sir John Nixon, at his house, regarding my advance from Amarah against Nureddin, at Kut-al-Amara.

The intelligence notes given me to read by Kemball, the M.G.G.S., showed me that Nureddin, in position astride the Tigris at Essinn, covering Kut-al-Amara, was making his right flank, on the right bank, very strong. Kemball thought that there must be some natural obstacle on the left bank covering Nureddin's left flank, of which we knew nothing. Sir John Nixon asked me to stay three or four days with him before proceeding to Amarah, so that we might talk everything over. He could not understand the delay in sanctioning the advance on Kut-al-Amara, and he told me that I should have my division complete for the advance on that place. I determined to get some line of communication troops out of him, in addition. The duties of the line of communication were then being carried out by the 12th Division.

Gorringe had taken Nasiriyeh on 24th July, after a stubborn resistance of a week or so on the part of the Turks, the bulk of whom retreated north along the Hai, and were said to have united with Nureddin's force at Kut-al-Amara. Nureddin, who had arrived at Baghdad from Constantinople with a good

reputation as an up-to-date general, had entrenched himself in the position of Essinn, astride the Tigris, and some eight miles down stream (or east) of Kut-al-Amara, and in this position he was concentrating all the troops available. It was also repeatedly reported by agents of information at Essinn, that the Turks were obstructing the river.

Nureddin had three divisions available:

35th Division at Kut; this division had retreated from Nasiriyeh and was probably not much over 3,000 men,

37th Division (Reserve division from Baghdad), 4,000 to 5,000 men,

38th Division (Arab Troops), reduced to some 3,500 men.

Possible reinforcements in the near future were stated by our Intelligence Branch to be as follows:—

(*a*) 12 battalions of 500 men each (an Army Corps) from Van and Erzroum. They were reported in Mosul on August 9th, and were expected to leave there for Baghdad on the 11th.

This force was reported as intending to leave in "killiks" or rafts. From local information, 200 men a day was a liberal estimate of the number that could be got off. Killiks take some time to make, for the wood has to be brought from the hills, and skins have to be tanned. A journey from Mosul to Baghdad was reckoned as at least a fortnight at that time of the year.

It would probably be more expeditious to march,

in which case the road on the left bank (about 250 miles) would most likely be chosen, since, though longer than the right bank road, it was better off for supplies.

(*b*) The Turks had five battalions of 600 men each in Khanikin as a detachment of security for that flank. These were reported by an informer to be expected by the Turkish Commander at Kut. This report was unconfirmed both as regards numbers and intention to move; we only knew that there was a force of some sort at Khanikin.

(*c*) There had been a further enlistment of Baghdadis and tribes. According to latest reports these "were not anxious to serve." But they would have to serve all the same, I thought.

The Turks were also busy fortifying a position at Ctesiphon, which was evidently to defend Baghdad if Nureddin were defeated at Essinn and had to retreat. The Turks were also reported to be ramping and bridging nullahs on the left bank of the Tigris, by the main road from Baghdad to Kut, with a view to the passage of guns.

Three steamers were reported at Kut, and two others were said to be working between Baghdad and Kut.

Nureddin had a mixed detachment of *couverture* pushed down river from Kut and Essinn, at Sheikh Saad.

On 23rd August, the M.G.G.S. handed me my general instructions:—

General Head-Quarters,
I.E.F. "D,"
Basra.
23rd August, 1915.

1. Your mission is the destruction and dispersal of the enemy, who, according to the Intelligence already furnished you, are prepared to dispute your advance, and the occupation of Kut-al-Amara, thereby consolidating our control of the Basra Vilayet.[2]

The troops at your disposal for carrying out this mission are:—

6th Division;
7th Lancers;
Divisional Troops. A maxim battery from the 12th Division when refitted;[3]
10th Brigade R.F.A.
1/5th Hants Howitzer battery;
86th Heavy battery R.G.A. 5-inch
104th Heavy battery R.G.A. 4-inch [less (on barges) 1 section];
Divisional Troops. Two 15 pr. guns as post guns.
48th Pioneers;[4]
17th and 22nd Companies of Sappers and Miners;[5]
6th Divisional ammunition column;[6]
Four 4.7 guns on barges.

[2] *i.e.,* province.

[3] [4] [5] [6] All belonged to the 6th Division. They had been taken away previously to complete the 12th Division up the Karun.

H.M. Naval armed Launches *Comet, Shaitan, Sumana.*

2 Aeroplanes at first, possibly 2 more later.

2 pack sets wireless, one of which should be kept installed on the steamer *Blosse Lynch.*

A wagon set at Amarah will be sent to Kut when that place is occupied.

3. As regards relations with the tribes on either side of the river, you will have the assistance of the Assistant Political Officer, Captain Leachman, who will keep you informed as to their attitude and the best measures for dealing with them.
It will be necessary to provide for the extension and security of the permanent telegraph line, which will be constructed as you advance.

4. A report is also required as to the number and location of entrenched posts for supplies, depots, etc., etc., on your line of communication between Amarah and Kut.
In the first instance these posts will have to be held by your troops.
Instructions as to scheme for defensible posts at Ali-al-Gharbi and Sheikh Saad have already been issued.[7] Steps should be taken to ensure that any material required for such posts should accompany your force, so as to avoid necessity of sending back to Amarah.

[7] During my absence at Simla.

5. A scheme for the concentration of 2 brigades (less one battalion) at Sheikh Saad has already been drawn up, the details of which were fully discussed in conference on 23rd August.[8] This scheme, after amendment as suggested at the Conference, may be acted on.

   For the further advance to Kut the detailed scheme will be prepared under your orders, and will include:—

   (*a*) Measures proposed for the attack on the Essinn position and occupation of Kut-al-Amara.

   (*b*) Instructions which it is proposed to give to flight-commander for aeroplane reconnaissance, bearing in mind the limited range to which the machines can operate compatible with safety and means of communication.

   For instance, no reconnaissance of Kut should be attempted until you have consolidated your position at Sheikh Saad, and flying base has been established there.

6. As soon as the occupation of Kut-al-Amara has been achieved you should get in touch with the leading sheikhs and establish a military Governor to initiate a civil administration.

7. "A wreck party," under Lieut. Slater, R.E., with divers and explosives, will be sent up to join your

[8] This scheme for concentrating two brigades at Sheikh Saad had been drawn up during my absence. I did not agree with it, as such concentration was within striking distance of the enemy. Therefore I said nothing, but determined to disregard the scheme as soon as I reached Amarah.

force in order to deal with the obstruction reported at Sinn—and any other work which may be necessary.

E. KEMBALL,
M.G., G.S.

Thus, as in the advance on Amarah from Kurna, I was again given an independent command, including the drawing up of the plan of operations.

In order to facilitate and expedite the work of operation orders I decided to divide my force into the following Groups:—

"No. 1 Group." Brig. Gen. Delamain.	16th Inf. Brigade. Half 22nd Company Sappers and Miners. 1 Section British Field Ambulance. 2 Section Indian Field Ambulance. 1 Section 34th Signal Company.	*Green flag.*
"No. 2 Group." Brig. Gen. Hoghton.	17th Inf. Brigade. Half 17th Company Sappers and Miners. 1 Section British Field Ambulance. 2 Section Indian Field Ambulance. 1 Section 34th Signal Company.	*Red flag.*

"No. 3 Group." Maj. Gen. Fry.	18th Inf. Brigade. Half 22nd Company Sappers and Miners. 1 Section British Field Ambulance. 2 Section Indian Field Ambulance. 1 Section 34th Signal Company.	*Yellow flag.*
"No. 4 Group." Brig. Gen. Smith, C.R.A.	Divisional Artillery. Half 17th Company Sappers and Miners. 34th Divisional Signal Company. Bridging Train. 48th Pioneers.	*Blue flag.*
"No. 5.Group." Senior R.A. Officer.	Divisional Ammunition Column. Field Ambulance and Hospital ship. Engineer stores and repairing boat.	*Blue and White flag.*
Divisional Supply Column.	(would always remain embarked in river transport.)	*Blue with White Ball flag.*

When embarked in transports on the river the ships of the above-named groups flew the indicated group flag.

The S.N.O., Captain Mackenzie, R.N., would command the Naval Flotilla.

I was to proceed to Amarah on the *Julnar,* leaving Basra on 25th August, and I had a conversation with Sir John Nixon before going on board. I said I would send him my plan of operations from Amarah, and a wire when I was ready to advance on Sheikh Saad.

I told Sir John Nixon that if I routed the Turks in the battle, and stampeded them, as at Kurna, I might follow them into Baghdad. That is, if they were well on the run, and no opposition was offered, I was willing to take the responsibility of entering Baghdad. What Government did not want, I understood, was that we should enter Baghdad, and then have to retreat before superior numbers—if Turkish reinforcements were sent from Asia Minor to retake the place. My official instructions were clearly to destroy and disperse Nureddin's force and to occupy Kut-al-Amara. But, in order to destroy a force, one must pursue, and, if I found there was no one left in Baghdad, I might proceed there in the gun-boat flotilla—leaving the bulk of my force in the Ctesiphon position, and, taking a battalion with me, bring away the European women who were prisoners there.

Sir John Nixon told me to send him a wire if I intended a rush into Baghdad, as he might be able to come on in time to enter Baghdad with me.

Sir Percy Cox, the political officer, told me that if

I went into Baghdad it would have almost the same political significance and importance as if I were to enter Constantinople. The news would go through all Asia.[9]

The *Julnar* sailed at 2 p. m., with 1,000 British Territorial soldiers and reservists on board, to fill up the gaps of my British battalions in the 6th Division —the Norfolks, Dorsets, and Oxfords. By 7.30 a. m., on 28th August, I was ashore at Amarah, installed in my headquarters house, and going into my plans for the advance. All the artillery allotted to my force was arriving daily, I found.

I was not going to have anything to do with the scheme of concentrating two brigades of the division at Sheikh Saad, within striking distance of the enemy, which had been settled at a "conference" during my absence, and I at once wired to General Head-Quarters, saying that to save time I should concentrate the whole of my division at Ali-al-Gharbi, where it was not within striking distance of the enemy, and should then, with my force united, advance on Sheikh Saad by route march—"as will be seen in the plan of operations I am shortly sending you."

Lt. Cowley, R.N.V.R.,[10] in command of the *Mejidieh*, assured me that no P-class steamer could proceed more than fifteen miles beyond Ali-al-Gharbi in the present state of the river. As Cowley had commanded the *Mejidieh*, one of the Lynch Com-

[9] Copied out of my diary under heading 25th August, 1915.

[10] Afterwards killed on the *Julnar* in his attempt to run the blockade and reach me at Kut with provisions.

pany steamers between Basra and Baghdad, for many years, I wired this to G.H.Q., and asked for a complete list of ships and barges available. I found that I had 500 combatants of the 6th Division in hospital at Amarah; that I had 105 days' supplies in hand at Amarah for British troops and 129 for Indian Troops, and about 127 days' grain for horses and mules. On leaving Amarah for Simla I had ordered the active purchase of local supplies by Annesley, so as to be independent of the Government supplies; and I found we had local supplies 30,000 maunds [11] of bhoosa; barley, 40,000 maunds; grass, 9,000 maunds; rice, 3,000 maunds; onions, 927 maunds; fuel, 1,156 maunds. I had roughly six months' forage in hand and a similar quantity of barley.[12]

On the afternoon of 28th August I drew up my plan or project of operations—for which, with some remarks, see the Appendix to Part II. It was the same as the so-called German system of attack, which is merely a copy of Napoleon's favourite manœuvre when on the offensive, either in strategy or in higher tactics, and is of the same value to-day as it was a hundred years ago, for the great, fundamental principles of strategy never alter. This system, as I have shown in the Introduction, was adopted by Moltke, who was the greatest pupil Napoleon ever had, and

[11] A maund—88 lbs. avoirdupois. 30,000 Maunds—1,183 tons English weight.

[12] It will be seen what a wise order this was, when I had to defend Kut. It was on these supplies that I held out.

who declared that "the art of a general-in-chief consists in containing the front of an enemy with a part of his force, whilst he uses his principal effort against the enemy's flank." This was the doctrine of the German General Staff, just as it was Napoleon's a hundred years ago. It gave Moltke his brilliant success over the Austrians in 1866 and the French in 1870, and has been continued by the German General Staff—and also by the French General Staff, taught by the experience of 1870. It is the embodiment of the fundamental principle of the Mass—to strike the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers. This principle must preside at all combinations in strategy and higher tactics, if those combinations are to be good.

A careful study of Napoleon's campaigns will show that the Napoleonic system consists in bringing to bear the Principal Mass of your force—be it in a theatre of war, strategically speaking—or on the field of battle, tactically speaking—on the enemy's weakest point, which must of necessity be one of his two flanks or his centre. Napoleon gave us, in his victories, twenty-seven examples of the turning manœuvre with his principal mass against the enemy's flank and rear—that is to say, that flank which lay nearest the enemy's natural line of retreat, which is, of course, his line of communications; and he gave us two examples only of finding the enemy's weakest point to be the centre.

All the great decisive battles of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries have been gained by the

turning or enveloping manœuvre, which is simple and suitable for great masses of troops. Königgrätz, Gravelotte, Sedan and Mukden are examples. The only occasion in which we are likely to see penetration succeed will be in a battle between moving armies, i.e., in a great encounter battle—when one army marching united and in parallel columns close to each other, bumps into another marching in columns widely distributed over a very wide extent of front on the system of the Germans.

If the campaigns of Napoleon, Frederick the Great, and Moltke are attentively studied, the secret of using the Principal Mass against the enemy's weakest point will be at once apparent in the strategy and tactics of all three.

In these days the attack against the enemy's centre has little or no chance of success from a tactical point of view, unless you have enormous gun power, for the increased efficiency of the defence renders penetration of the centre more and more difficult, and reduces the chance of success of such an attack, whilst failure may result in the attacking force being itself enveloped and destroyed. The enveloping or turning attack is more and more necessary to-day.

Our own Field Service Regulations (Part I, Operations, 1909, reprint 1914, section 102) clearly recognise this fact: "It will usually be wiser to direct the decisive effort against one of the enemy's flanks, the choice of objective being made either before or after deployment, according to circumstances. The development of fire effect is usually facilitated

when the plan of battle has for its object the envelopment of one or both of the enemy's flanks." In late years I have often noticed the advocacy amongst senior officers of the envelopment of both flanks of the adversary. This is only permissible if you are in overwhelming superiority in numbers to the enemy, as Napoleon was to Mack at Ulm, or Moltke to MacMahon at Sedan. Otherwise to envelop by both flanks is a weakness and a violation of the principle of Economy of Force. Napoleon gives us only one example of the envelopment of both flanks of the enemy—Ulm. I remember that after a lecture I had given at home, in 1913, one of our leading generals said to me: "But Wellington enveloped both flanks of the French at Vittoria." I replied: "One could take any liberties against so incompetent a commander as King Joseph. Wellington would not have tried that against Napoleon—or Massèna or Marmont." But, as a matter of fact, Wellington delivered an absolutely frontal attack at the battle of Vittoria; it was certainly not an envelopment or a turning attack.

There are great risks, it is often said, in the turning manœuvre, which is why the cautious Moltke preferred not to follow Napoleon's favourite turning attack, but chose rather the less dangerous envelopment, or overlapping, of the enemy's flank. This gives mediocre results as compared with the great consequences of a turning manœuvre. "He who fears risks," said Napoleon *à propos* of its risks, "should not play cards."

If the gap between the turning attack and the other part of the force is too dangerously wide, one can put an intermediate force into the gap, as was Napoleon's custom. For instance, Bernadotte's corps was placed in the gap between Napoleon's force and Davoust's corps, which performed the turning manœuvre at Jena. Davoust was some fourteen miles from Napoleon's force.

This gap in a small force acting independently, in the case, say, of a division, or an army corps, is governed on principle by the effective range of field artillery—about 5,000 yards, or three miles. In the case of an army, heavy artillery range would govern the distance of this gap. In the case of a group of armies, where one army constitutes the minimum force making the frontal containing attack, whilst the other two armies play the *rôle* of the principal mass in performing the turning manœuvre, one would regulate this gap to one, or at the most two short marches, according to circumstances and the degree of training, discipline, and prestige of your opponent. In studying Napoleon's campaigns it is most instructive to see how, when circumstances interfered with the turning manœuvre, he improvised measures and movements in order to carry out his original manœuvre and intentions.[13]

The Germans simply followed Napoleon; but the majority of French Generals have in late years favoured the principle of the mass applied to the enemy's centre, the attack called the *percement.*

[13] Cf. Napoleon at the battles of Bautzen, Wagram and Austerlitz.

Strange to say, many believed in it, and I found, when I was military *attaché* in Paris in 1905, that it was generally believed by the Ecole de Guerre to be Napoleon's favourite manœuvre! Of course, this was nonsense. Napoleon gave only two examples of the attack on the centre—Austerlitz and Ratisbon; all his other great victories were the turning attack against the hostile flank and rear of the envelopment.[14]

Not only did the French Generals as a whole favour the attack against the centre, but their manœuvres, generally speaking, were not predetermined; they waited until the battle had begun in order to discover where the enemy's weakest point lay, and they evinced a great tendency to discover that weak point in the enemy's centre. This method leads to much vacillation and hesitation—in addition to which the enormous battle-fronts of to-day preclude all impromptu manœuvring. When your manœuvre is predetermined, you know your own mind, and you are determined to carry it through, in spite of anything the enemy may do to stop you. Your different groups or columns march on their objectives without hesitation, and you know that the wing of the enemy on which you are going to throw your Principal Mass must be overlooked; you know that to nibble at or lay your hands on some particular

[14] Borodino is an example of Napoleon's executing an enveloping manœuvre when attacking an adversary whose numbers are approximate to his own. The battle of Lützen is another example, but this was a battle of encounter.

locality is not of the least use—it will only give time to the enemy to retire comfortably to a new position.

But to continue after my long digression (the object of which is to show the military student why my manœuvre was predetermined): What could the enemy do to upset my predetermined manœuvre? I find jotted down in my pocket-book of that time the different contingencies which might arise in this operation, where the primary objective was to defeat Nureddin in the Essinn position and to occupy Kut-al-Amara:—

(*a*) "Nureddin, who has two weak divisions, will in all probability be reinforced by a division from Mosul before I can attack him. There are plenty of rumours that Turkish troops have arrived in Baghdad from Mosul. In this case his force will probably be equal to mine. The gun power will be in my favour, but Nureddin's position is reported to be of great strength (and so it proved).

(*b*) "Nureddin may possibly retire on my approach and fall back to occupy the position at Ctesiphon in order to defend Baghdad; but this is not probable, if only for the reason that he is labouring night and day on the defensive position at Essinn."

Owing to the lack of sufficient transport, it was impossible to carry out the fundamental principle of Rapidity, which is part and parcel of the principle that the offensive alone conducts to victory. With

rapidity one might add Surprise. By reason of our being so undermanned as regards land and water transport, great delays took place after each forward bound we made in the advance up the Tigris.

If Nureddin retired at my approach—and my aerial service would give me instant information—I decided to push ahead with B Column (18th Brigade and a proportion of guns) on the ships of the Naval Flotilla—for I had not enough ships to transport more than a brigade at a time—and to endeavour to overtake a part of his force, say his rearguard, and destroy it. But if I could not manage to overtake him I should return to Kut and consolidate my position there, as the orders from India were not to advance beyond that point.

(*c*) "Nureddin may receive heavy reinforcements, and feel himself strong enough to advance against me and fight a battle of encounter. In this case I shall deliver a defensive-offensive battle."

The Napoleonic system for fighting such a battle follows the same principles (of Economy of Force and of the Mass) as are applied to a purely offensive battle. The Minimum Force, however, rests on the passive defensive on the main avenue of approach of the bulk of the hostile force, solidly entrenched behind some obstacle, if possible. Its position is also strengthened with all the art of the engineer—field works, fortified villages, etc. These should form as a rule a curtain in front of the defensive position in

the shape of advanced posts. The bulk of the artillery should also be attached to the minimum force to increase its defensive power.

The Principal Mass, with the bulk of the cavalry working on its exterior flank, I should use just as in an offensive battle, previously concealing it on that flank which lies nearest to my natural line of retreat or line of communication, so that I can use it offensively against the enemy's Principal Mass, enveloping attack, or offensive wing of manœuvre; for if my adversary has any knowledge of tactics whatever, he would assuredly envelop that flank of mine which lies nearest my natural line of retreat. In a case like mine, where I always had one flank resting on the Tigris, there was no doubt as to which flank the enemy would envelop if on the offensive—it would always be the desert flank.

As soon as the heads of the hostile columns advancing against the Minimum Force became engaged I should on principle launch my Principal Mass against the enemy's flank. This manœuvre is the antidote to the German enveloping attack.

Even if it happened that the enemy's offensive wing of manœuvre enveloped the flank opposite to that of our natural line of retreat, it did not much matter, for the advance alone of the columns of our Principal Mass against the flank of the attacker would at once paralyse all movement on his part, and would cause the utmost consternation and hesitation, and probably flight. It will be seen in this book that I applied this system practically in the Rear Guard

battle at Umm-al-Tubul, on 1st December, 1915, when the Turks overtook me and I was compelled suddenly to fight a defensive battle. I adopted the dispositions which I have described, using my brigade of mounted troops and horse artillery to deliver a counter-attack on the flank of the attackers, and supporting this attack with the whole of my artillery. The enemy halted, hesitated, and retreated, and I was thus enabled to break off action and resume my retreat in good order.

Surprise is, of course, more difficult in these days owing to that new agent of reconnaissance, the aeroplane; but with small forces—up to 40,000 or 50,000 men—night marches should give you the necessary surprise. Even when dealing with groups of armies it is much more possible than most people imagine. What of the strategic turning move of the Principal Mass of the German armies through Belgium into France in 1914, while their Minimum Force fortified and entrenched itself in Alsace-Lorraine?

It will be seen that Sir John Nixon was unable to give me sufficient land transport for my whole force. I found, on going into my ways and means, that Column B, in particular, was practically without land transport.

It is difficult to exaggerate the danger of the cutting down of land transport of an expeditionary force. Here was one of my three infantry brigades tied, as it were, to the river bank and unable to manœuvre away from the river and the ships, for lack of transport, for a greater distance than three or four

miles. It reminded me of Wellington's letter of protest to Lord Castlereagh in 1808, when the British Expedition, rather smaller than the force I was in command of, landed in Portugal, at Mondego Bay, with the mission of assisting the Portuguese people to eject the French from that country. "This department," wrote Wellington, "deserves your serious attention. The existence of the army depends on it, and yet the people who manage it are incapable of managing anything outside a counting-house. I shall be obliged to leave Spencer's guns behind for want of means of moving them, and I should have been obliged to have left my own behind also, were it not for the horses of the Irish commissariat. Let nobody ever prevail upon you to send a force to any part of Europe without horses to draw their guns."

The habit of sending British expeditions overseas with no transport was almost universal in the Seven Years' War and long before that—and from the Peninsular War even up to the present day. I think the reason may be found in the fact that British Expeditions have been mostly amphibious; some island in the West Indies was to be captured or some town on the coast of North or South America to be attacked and burnt. No marches inland, and no manœuvring were required. The fleet with the troops arrived off the coast. A landing was effected, or they were chased off the beach as soon as they landed; or the town was rushed, the harbour captured, and the local port taken by assault. If the assault was a failure then everyone hastily scrambled on board

ship again, the general and admiral each accused the other of hesitation or what not, and off they sailed on another raid against some other unsuspecting settlement—it might be Porto Rico, Havana, Buenos Aires. But in all military history the spending department of Government has been run, generally speaking, by men who were determined to gain merit by parsimony—possibly having no other merit to plead—forgetting that real economy is only to be found in efficiency of means. I suppose that this war, as regards the principal theatre of it in France, is the first in British military history in which transport has not been cut down—in short, in which money has been spent lavishly.

My Divisional Headquarter Staff had been altered, or, rather, shuffled, since the Kurna-Amarah operation. Colonel Gamble, my G.S.O., I, had been promoted, on my recommendation, to Brigadier-General. In his place I had Colonel Evans, R.E.[15] As G.S.O., II, I now had Captain Peel of the Indian Army, who had been G.S.O., III, in the Kurna-Amarah operation. Captain Morland of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry became my G.S.O., III. Major Davie, Indian Army, was still in his place as D.A.A.G., and Lieutenant-Colonel Chitty of the Indian Army was, as in the Kurna-Amarah operation, my Assistant Quartermaster-General. Instead of Stapleton, of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, who had been my D.A.A. and Q.M.G., and had been invalided for typhoid fever, I now had

[15] He had been my Divisional Engineer Commander up to this time.

Major Gilchrist, Indian Army, who came to me from the 18th Brigade, where he had been Staff Captain.

Colonel Annesley, of the Supply and Transport, was still Assistant Director of Supplies, as he had been in the Kurna-Amarah operations. Colonel Hehir, Indian Medical Service, still remained as Assistant Director of Medical Services, with Major Brown Mason, R.A.M.C., as his assistant. Captain Begg, R.A., was my Ordnance Officer. Major Forbes, Supply and Transport Corps, was the Assistant Director of Transport.

To arrange for the march of a force is a staff duty of the highest importance; but to arrange for the combined advance of a force, part by route-march and part by river-transport, was a staff duty of a still higher importance. I have already shown that both river and land transport were insufficient. It was the old story of making bricks without straw. The peculiarly unhealthy climate rendered the medical arrangements and organisation of marked importance, and the attack on the Turkish force, under a general with Nureddin's reputation, entrenched in a stronger position, promised a considerable butcher's bill. In Colonel Hehir I had the best and most experienced medical advice. He had sound opinions, did not dream of trying to convert the fighting force into a train of stretcher carriers, and yet took all possible advantage of the carts of the Supply and Transport Corps to add to field ambulance arrangements. But the impossible could not be thought of. Iced champagne in the middle of the Mesopotamian desert

would be without doubt an admirable medicine, but if you tried to provide for your sick and wounded during a desert campaign as you did in the North of France, it would have been impossible to have moved the expedition beyond Basra or Kurna. As Sir John Nixon told me, when I asked for more troops in my advance from Amarah with which to take Kut: "You must cut your suit according to your cloth."

Having fixed upon the manner in which my little army was to be fed, the nature and amount of the ration to be given to man and beast, the extent to which my means provided carriage for sick and wounded, the supply and quantity of ammunition for man and gun, I came to the most important detail—the organisation of my 13,000 combatants, and the project or plan of operations with which I should defeat the enemy, and, if possible, destroy him. This higher tactical and strategical work I took on myself as my own particular province, and the General Staff put my orders and decisions into operation orders; but the success of my operations depended on the manner in which my A.Q.M.G. and his assistant, my Assistant Director of Supplies and Assistant Director of Medical Services did their work, almost as much as it did on my tactics and strategy. The work this staff did in enabling me to advance to Kut-al-Amara, thence nearly to Baghdad, and then to hold out for five months at Kut, some 390 miles from Basra and the sea, speaks for itself. I can give it no higher praise than to point to what it accomplished.

My Brigadier-Generals were as follows:—

Brigadier-General Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., Indian Army	16th Inf. Brigade
Brigadier-General Hoghton,[16] F.A.	17th Inf. Brigade
Major-General Fry, C.B., Indian Army	18th Inf. Brigade
Brigadier-General Commanding Artillery, 6th Division, Smith, R. A.	

Divisional-Engineer Commander Major Winsloe, R.E., was the same as in the Kurna-Amarah operations.

The commanding officers of Units in the Sixth Division were as follows:—

16TH BRIGADE.

2nd Dorset Regiment—Major F. W. Radcliffe.
20th Punjabis—Major R. S. St. John.
104th Wellesley's Rifles—Lt. Col. C. B. L. Clery.
117th Maharattas—Lt. Col. H. K. MacGeorge.

17TH BRIGADE.

1st Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry—Lt. Col. E. A. E. Lethbridge, D.S.O.
22nd Punjabis—Lt. Col. T. G. Blois-Johnson.

[16] He had replaced Colonel Gamble of the British service, whom I had been allowed to promote from G.S.O., I., to command the 17th Infantry Brigade, and had been invalided sick during my absence from Amarah.

103rd Maharatta Light Infantry—Lt. Col. W. H. Brown.
119th Infantry—Lt. Col. J. R. Darley.

18TH BRIGADE.
2nd Norfolk Regiment—Major F. C. Lodge.
7th Rajputs—Lt. Col. H. O. Parr.
119th Maharatta Light Infantry—Lt. Col. G. S. Frazer.
120th Rajputana Infantry—Lt. Col. E. Codrington.

10TH BRIGADE R.F.A.—Lt. Col. E. S. Cleeve.
63rd Battery—Major H. B. Smith.
76th Battery—Lt. Col. T. Nevinson.
82nd Battery—Major H. N. St. J. Maule.

7th Hariana Lancers—Major G. P. O. Carnegy.
16th Cavalry—Major C. D. Mears, M.V.O.

I made every effort to fill up the ranks of the units on the principle of Economy of Force. For example, on arrival at Amarah, I at once made a raid in the convalescent depot there. Establishments of this nature are much open to abuse, and are, unless sharply looked after, much sought after by skulkers. They should be under the command of a military officer of standing, who should be carefully selected for this duty—stern and determined, but just—and the G.O.C. should frequently inspect these places. On 5th September I found there were three or

four hundred soldiers—sufficient to turn the scale of a battle—well enough to rejoin their battalions at once; the remainder, too weakly to rejoin, but well enough to handle a rifle, were put on garrison duty at Amarah, where they would have nothing to do. The troops at Amarah had been exercised in using hand grenades, and the aircraft had been practised in aeroplane observation for artillery fire.

I also issued instructions to all commanders of units and heads of departments to make every possible effort to economise men. "Every man employed on the line of communications means one less rifle in the ranks." For the garrisons of any posts I might have to make on the communications, I announced that I should use convalescents.[17] All these would be at a minimum strength, and skilful use of ground and field fortification must needs make amends for their size.

I was definitely allotted by G.H.Q. at Basra eleven steamers, including two tugs, and twenty-three barges and lighters. Of the latter only five were decked for animals, and they also included two coal and oil barges and gun barges. One of the steamers was fitted up as a hospital ship. This was the *Mosul*, the Turkish steamer I had captured in the pursuit from Kurna to Amarah. Major Winsloe, R.E., had also six mahelas or Arab dhows with stores as follows:—

[17] Always a custom with Napoleon. One meets with repeated orders on this subject in his military correspondence.

1st Mahela—jetties for landing troops.
2nd Mahela—material for defensive posts on line of communication.
3rd Mahela—material for defensive positions, or installation of troops in a camp.
4th Mahela—explosives.
5th Mahela, 6th Mahela—bridge train gear.

Wheatley bags had been distributed to the different battalions for carrying water if necessary, and for making rafts—and as much rope as could be spared.

I had 330 transports, carts and 740 animals with the Sixth Division, and I made every effort to get more in order to enable my Principal Mass to manœuvre on a wide turning manœuvre in the desert; I asked Headquarters to buy camels for this purpose, but the few I got were as wild as hawks and could not be trained for loading. This astonished me after my experiences in the Nile expeditions of 1885 and 1896-98.

Now that I was ordered to take the offensive on a large scale, it was indicated that a far higher standard of preparation, as regards numbers, equipment, and land and sea transport was demanded. In short, all the elements demanded by the strategic offensive were lacking. There was an insufficiency of the numbers required by the offensive, which demands great superiority in numbers; no copious

stream of reinforcements, munitions, and supplies followed up the striking force; and the essential principle of rapidity, which must be added to the offensive, was out of the question, owing to the lack of transport—to say nothing of the great length of our communications, which ran through a hostile country. Military history proves to us that the boldest and best plans in war, when the strategic offensive is adopted, lead to ultimate failure if the available resources do not hold out until we have successfully gained the final objective. This we see by the examples of Hannibal, Charles XII of Sweden, and Napoleon in 1812; while a further instance is the failure of the German General Staff in 1914 to calculate the proper numbers and resources required to throw the armies of France in the dust, and then to take France and overcome the remaining resistance in the country. In a secondary theatre, the principle of Economy of Force demands that the force allotted shall be of minimum strength and consequently on the defensive.

I repeat my opinion that having taken Amarah and Nasiriyeh, we should have consolidated our position in the Basra Province on the lines suggested by me earlier in this book—with minimum forces entrenched strongly at Amarah, Nasiriyeh, Ahwaz, and the Principal Mass fortified at the Central Place of Basra, with adequate water transport to facilitate the rapid union of the Principal Mass with any threatened minimum force. Only in the event of the suc-

cess of the Allies at Gallipoli or in France, the Principal Theatre, should the strategic offensive have been taken in Mesopotamia.

I received a telegram from the M.G.G.S., dated 29th August, asking me, in the event of circumstances imposing the necessity of a pursuit to Baghdad after the fight at Essinn, how I proposed to carry it out. I replied that I should carry out a pursuit with the Naval Flotilla, as I did after the battle of Kurna, endeavouring to hold up and drive off the river retreating detachments of the enemy, my division, under command of the next senior general, following up by route march. I might install my force in the Ctesiphon (or Salman Pak) position [18] whilst I went into Baghdad with the flotilla to reconnoitre, act according to circumstances, and to rescue the European women prisoners there; I should take perhaps a battalion and machine guns with me on the flotilla.

I asked M.G.G.S. to reduce the post at Kila Salih, south of Amarah, from a battalion to a company. This garrison was formed by the 7th Gurkhas, belonging to the 12th Division, who, I suggested, might garrison Amarah on my advance, and I assumed that my line of communications between that place and Kut would be under my command until my operations were concluded.

I had not yet got the 18th Infantry Brigade (less the Norfolks, who were at Amarah with me) up at Amarah. So I wrote privately to Sir John Nixon, on 31st August, that I wished to have this brigade

[18] This would menace the unfortified city of Baghdad.

united to the rest of my division as soon as possible. There was a possibility of Nureddin falling back on Ctesiphon and not standing at Essinn, in which case I should ask permission to follow him up and attack him at Ctesiphon. I told him that I was always impressing officers with the vital necessity of the principle of Economy of Force in the question of dissemination of troops along the line of communications; that every superfluous man there meant the loss of a rifle in the battle which was to decide the fate of the whole country. I was cutting down the garrison of each post to a minimum. All that was required in that way was a closed work with or without a post gun, overhead cover, enfilade and reverse fire protection, a clear field of fire, automatic alarms, and 500 rounds per rifle, with food for three months and water in the post itself. In this country a platoon, I thought, ought to be enough to garrison a post on the Line of Communication.

I had turned Amarah into a second Rawal Pindi as regards training of troops, which were all over the great plain on the right bank of the river. I had inspected the 17th Brigade in an attack that morning and was very pleased with what I saw.

I was ready to start, I said, as soon as the ships arrived from Basra. The heat at Amarah was 110°-117°! The days were as hot as ever, but the nights were cool, and the sick rate was going down rapidly now that the troops understood they were to advance very soon for a battle.

On the same date, 31st August, I wired to the

M.G.G.S. that, as my whole force would march when I advanced from Sheikh Saad and as I intended to carry out a turning move for the battle, I must have my complete first line divisional transport; and also second line transport, for regimental reserve ammunition and one day's rations. That was a minimum requirement, to render my force sufficiently mobile and self-contained. I required 450 pack and 300 draught mules and 150 carts in addition to those I had already.

I sanctioned Colonel Annesley in bringing up 300 Arab coolies to unload rations from the barges. In the great heat I must spare the fighting troops, who would find marching very trying.

The result of my representations about disseminating strength on the Line of Communications was that the line from Amarah to Kut was handed over to the 12th Division, so that my force should be united for the battle.

It was arranged, with regard to my food supplies going forward, that the 1st Echelon should take ten days' supplies for the whole force, the 2nd Echelon 20 days, and the 3rd Echelon 30 days' supplies.

On 1st September I put in orders the "grouping" of my division, as shown earlier, in order to facilitate and expedite the circulation of operation orders, quartering the troops, etc. I told Colonel Hehir, A.D.M.S., that he must allow for six per cent. casualties and that we should require one medical officer to every forty sick or wounded.

I had 600 rounds per gun for the 10th Brigade

R.F.A., 300 rounds per gun for the 4-inch and 5-inch guns and the howitzers, and 300 rounds per rifle for the infantry; my force mustered about 10,275 Combatants, with 30 guns. I exclude the Hants Territorial Battalion, which was to remain at Amarah.

Eleven steamers and twenty-five barges had arrived, and so I began to move troops to Ali-al-Gharbi on September 1st, for the forward concentration of my force. G.H.Q. asked me to note that matters would be delayed for a fortnight owing to my demands for transport. Since I had only asked for the bedrock minimum to fight with on land, I wondered if G.H.Q. desired me to win the battle by remaining on board ship!

As in the Kurna-Amarah operation I was ordered to plan and perform a difficult and delicate operation, and had utterly inadequate means with which to carry it out. I find in my diary of 2nd September, comments on this. "There is no knowing what I may *not* have to do in this advance on Kut. I know that if I were in the place of Nureddin, the British commander would find me in a strong position, seven or eight miles *inland* from the river, knowing by my spies that the British had little transport other than ships and barges. In other words, I should take up a strategic flanking position to the river line of advance. I shall now have to extemporise a donkey corps if I can."

Smarting over the transport business, I wrote the following private letter, on 2nd September, to Sir John Nixon, at Basra:—

"I feel very hurt at being told I am to base my plans on the river and land transport allotted to me. See the wire Kemball has sent me this morning. I have cut down units to the *minimum,* and I have more troops under my command than Lord Wolseley had in the Nile Expedition of 1885. You have given me a most serious and important operation to carry out—the most important and serious one that I know of in the last 30 years. . . . Who can tell what manœuvre I may not have to make? There is a possibility of my entering Baghdad, and *perhaps not by river.*[19] I may find Nureddin taking up a flanking position to the river line of advance, some miles inland—since he must know by his intelligence that we have little transport apart from our ships. This is what you would find me doing if you changed me for Nureddin, and a nice time I would give your general in consequence.

"As for the M.G.G.S. saying I have delayed operations a fortnight by my demands for transport! I must suppose he is not serious. . . . I hope to be able to pursue if I have mule transport, and I am now going to improvise a donkey or coolie corps in place of the mules short of the numbers I asked for. I am concentrating my force forward on Ali-al-Gharbi now. Delamain constitutes my covering detachments. He is on the right bank at Ali-al-Gharbi, so I am concentrating the division on that bank. The hostile mixed detachment at Sheikh Saad

[19] By which I meant that I might have to make a long march or marches inland away from the river.

is also on the right bank.[20] We shall march by this bank to Sheikh Saad, after which I shall cross to the left. Remember, there was no pursuit after the battle of Shaiba because of the lack of transport; there was no pursuit after the Nasiriyeh fight for the same reason, I am told, and in consequence the 2000 Turkish fugitives from Nasiriyeh are now added to Nureddin's force at Essinn."

On September 3rd there was a cavalry skirmish some nine miles north of Ali-al-Gharbi, between a squadron of 7th Indian Lancers, doing escort to the telegraph repairing party, and about two hundred Turkish cavalry. The 22nd Punjabis were sent out by Delamain in support of the Cavalry, but found that the Turkish cavalry had retired.

As I wanted to be able to fight the two 4-inch guns and at least two of the 5-inch guns on land, since they would make an addition to my fighting force, I wired on September 3rd to M.G.G.S. for forty pairs of bullocks and five ammunition carts in addition. Twenty-five of these bullocks were at Kurna, sixteen I had at Amarah, and I asked him to send up the balance of thirty-nine, which were at Basra. The last echelon of steamers going back from Ali-al-Gharbi to Amarah for supplies brought up the bullocks as I requested.

I received a wire on 2nd September, informing me that the 30th Brigade of the 12th Division had

[20] I also intended to try to make Nureddin Pacha think I was going to attack by the right bank.

been allotted for my line of communications between Amarah and Kut-al-Amara, as follows:—

At Amarah—Headquarters 30th Brigade.	
	1/4 Hants.
	Wing of 24th Punjabis.
At Ali-al-Gharbi.	Wing 24th Punjabis.
At Kut-al-Amara.	76th Punjabis.
	2/7th Gurkhas.

In accordance with my recommendation, Kila Salih had now been abandoned.

I see in my diary that I hoped to be able to deliver battle on 23rd September, reckoning that I could advance from Ali-al-Gharbi on 21st September. I should have some forty days' food in hand from the day of the battle.

I wired to Brigadier-General Delamain, at Ali-al-Gharbi, on 3rd September, asking him to purchase as many local supplies as possible and to collect local transport if he could, as G.H.Q. were starving me as regards mules. I was 300 short of the number I wanted. Delamain wired that he could get 100 camels and 100 bullocks and donkeys (this would be equal to the 300 mules I was short of), and that he was getting barley and bhoosa. He also told me that local information regarding the left bank of the Tigris about Essinn was to the effect that the marsh indicated on the degree sheets was correct, and that it was some 18 inches deep on the right bank. On the left bank the marsh indicated in the map was said to be drying up, but it seemed doubtful if it would

be fit for heavy guns. There was only a mile of dry ground between the river and the marsh.

However, I felt confident that this marsh would not prevent my predetermined turning movement, for I never contemplated taking heavy guns on this manœuvre. The divisional artillery, including the heavy guns, would be on the river bank supporting my minimum force and engaged in the frontal attack on the adversary's position.

As regards my information of Nureddin and his force: Intelligence reports up to 23rd August put him down at 7,000 to 8,000 combatants, plus 3,000 Arab horsemen. Eighteen guns were in position at Essinn. He had been entrenching since early in June, and railway material (plates, sleepers, etc.) and timber had been brought from Baghdad to strengthen his field fortifications. It was reported that there was an obstruction in the river between the two lines of entrenchments on each side of the river. It was believed to consist of two mahelas and eight barges, all connected by chains and filled with bricks and sand. The obstruction was in the navigable channel—the Tigris at Essinn being about half the width of the Shatt-el-Arab at Basra.

On the right bank there were three lines of trenches, one behind the other, with transverse trenches, etc. On the left bank there was only one line of entrenchments and the flank was open to the desert.[21]

21 But the enemy were busy digging all day and every day, and Turks dig like moles and with the utmost rapidity. The position on the left bank was quite strong on the day of the battle.

The country was open and, generally speaking, unobstructed, usually heavy going up to July. The enemy had a boat-bridge connecting the two banks, situated well to the rear of the entrenched position and beyond range of our artillery fire.

The enemy was reported to be entrenching and fortifying a position at Sulman Pak or Ctesiphon, where there were 500 troops. It was also stated that 15 guns were at Baghdad, which were destined for the armament of Kut.

There were rumours of reinforcements on the way from Constantinople and Aleppo. Two thousand Anatolian troops and one Aleppo battalion arrived in June; and it was reported that Djemal Pacha would bring his two army corps from Syria to Baghdad.

Nureddin had six river steamers and three motor-launches.

From Kut to Azizieh there was a good desert road, and from Azizieh to Baghdad a carriage road.

On 6th September I wrote to Sir John Nixon a private letter as follows:—

"It seems to me that Nureddin has been reinforced and has more guns—but I shall not know the truth till my aircraft make their reconnaissance of the enemy's position.

"I think *personally* that Nureddin Pacha is either weak in numbers, and so not strong enough to advance, or is utterly ignorant of the art of war. I will tell you why. Delamain's brigade should never have

been sent up to Ali-al-Gharbi *en l'air,* so much nearer to the enemy than to his own division![22]

"Had I been in Nureddin's place I would have wiped out Delamain. The principle for covering service is two short marches, or one march—on rivers available for steamers, say twenty miles at the most. When I returned and found this arrangement I was not happy till I had united the 17th Brigade to Delamain's. Disasters occur by tactical errors of this sort. I'll take risks with any man where it is *necessary* to do so, but you would never find me making tactical errors like that. I take no risks in that way.

"I am afraid my advance will seem slow to you, but it cannot be avoided, when I have to battledore and shuttlecock my transport about to fetch up troops and stores in homœopathic doses. I don't suppose Nureddin has 30 guns—if he has, we shall have a tabasco time! I reckon he has 18 guns, but I notice that every day brings reports of increases in his strength. When I do get within punching range of Nureddin you can rely on my taking him by the collar."

Sixty-seven more rifles were added to my force by Hehir's medical inspection of convalescent British N.C.O.'s and men at Amarah on 8th September; and a hundred and ten Indian soldiers also came in for the same reason.

Having seen the bulk of my force off on its way to Ali-al-Gharbi, where it was to be concentrated by

[22] This was done when I had gone away to Simla at the end of June, 1915.

echelons of brigades in ships, I followed on 10th September, with my divisional staff on board the *Mejidieh,* commanded by Lieut. Cowley, R.N.R. We reached Ali-al-Gharbi on 11th September, at 11 a. m. Delamain informed me that the hostile mixed detachment at Gunfad had fallen back.

I had now united practically the whole of my force at Ali-al-Gharbi; only the 63rd Battery, R.F.A., and the howitzer battery remained at Amarah to be brought on by steamers and barges, to unite with the force at Sheikh Saad. I had present at Ali-al-Gharbi some 11,000 combatants and 30 guns, excluding the half 30th Brigade of the 12th Division, which, though allotted to the line of communication, I intended to use in my battle, and exclusive also of the two batteries mentioned above still to join me from Amarah.

The troops at my disposal for the coming battle were as follows:—

6th Division (16th, 17th and 18th Brigades) reinforced later by half the 30th Brigade, under Lt. Col. Climo, D.S.O.

The following Divisional Troops:—

7th Lancers (and 16th Cavalry later).
A Maxim battery from 12th Division.
10th Brigade, R.F.A.
Divisional Ammunition Column.
1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery.
86th Heavy Battery R.G.A. 5-inch, on barges.

104th Heavy Battery R.G.A. 4-inch (less 1 section), on barges.
Two 15-pr. guns as post guns.
48th Pioneers.
34th Divisional Sig. Co.
No. 17 and 22 Companies, Sappers and Miners, and a Bridge Train.
Searchlight Section.
Army Corps Signal Company.
Nos. 1, 2, 106th Field Ambulances.
2 Sections No. 19 Clearing Hospital.
4 4.7 inch guns on horse-boats.
H.M. Naval armed launches *Comet, Shaitan, Sumana,* reinforced later by two seaplanes.
2 Aeroplanes (reinforced later by two more).
2 Pack sets of Wireless.

The total being some 11,000 combatants.

From Ali-al-Gharbi I intended that the Division should move forward in two columns:—

Column "A." 16th and 17th Brigades and two Batteries, R.F.A., by march route on right bank.

Column "B." 18th Brigade and Divisional Artillery.

Divisional Ammunition Column.
Divisional Supply Column.
Field Ambulance.
} by ship.

On 11th September, at Ali-al-Gharbi, I issued complete orders for the advance to Sheikh Saad on the following day.

On 13th September I reconnoitred Sheikh Saad, on the gunboat *Comet*, with the Senior Naval Officer, Captain Mackenzie, R.N. After a few rifle shots half a troop of cavalry galloped away, helped in their flight by our machine gun on the bridge. Sheikh Saad had been abandoned by the hostile mixed detachment of security, which fell back on the Turkish main body at Essinn, on our approach.

The Division halted in the Musandak reach on this date. The heat can only be described as terrific—110° to 116° in the shade. Nevertheless, by marching from daybreak to 8.30 a. m. only, the casualties were not great during the march. On 12th September, 67 men fell out, of whom 39 were British (one died) and 28 were Indian soldiers. On the march on 13th September, 25 British and 9 Indian soldiers fell out. After this date the rate dropped to *nil.*

On 14th September, an aerial reconnaissance was carried out by Major Reilly on the Turkish position at Essinn, near Kut-al-Amara; he went 28 miles (three or four miles beyond Kut), or 56 miles there and back. The reconnaissance reported that the enemy's trenches and camp sites on the right bank were deserted; gun emplacements could be seen, but no guns; but there were camps on the left bank, and lighters and steamers were seen. Afterwards it was proved that the enemy had concealed their guns, and

the infantry were put in covered trenches on sighting the aeroplane.

On receipt of this report I ordered another aerial reconnaissance and also one by the naval flotilla, which was to engage partially and make the enemy show their guns, for I suspected that they had concealed themselves. The reconnaissance of the naval flotilla having returned, the S.N.O. was convinced that Nureddin Pacha's force was in position at Essinn in full strength, and the A.P.O.[23] was informed by the Arabs on the banks of the river near Essinn that the Turks were digging entrenchments across the neck of dry land, between the marshes of Suwada and Suwechi at the northern extremity of their position on the left bank, while six more guns had arrived and "some cavalry." It was also reported that there was a great marsh on this flank. This, of course, was the flank I had decided to turn and attack with my Principal Mass.

I marched again on 15th September to Abu Rummànah, some eight miles from the enemy's position.

Here I had to halt in order to get up the 63rd Battery, R.F.A., and the howitzer battery, together with the remaining supplies from Amarah. This entailed sending back the whole of my ships, and thus I was unable to advance till the 25th, on which night the last of the ships arrived. I was much worried over this, and naturally it was a most serious delay, due solely

[23] Assistant Political Officer—Major Leachman, Royal Sussex Regiment.

to the fact that an insufficient number of decked barges had been given to me.

The enemy were digging in hard, and consequently were growing stronger daily. I had received news that Nureddin was strengthening his extreme left flank; and that there was a marsh also on the northern (left) flank, of the enemy gave me food for serious reflection. On the arrival of the division at Abu Rummànah I bivouacked it on the right bank. Owing to the depth of the water the ships had to be brought in on this side; otherwise I had intended at this point to halt on the left bank, to which I must cross before battle.

I talked matters over with Major Reilly, and asked him to make an air reconnaissance, and I also directed a cavalry reconnaissance to determine the extent of dry land between the two marshes, and to investigate the trenches which, it was said, were being dug in this locality. Reilly, a most daring and able aviator, had done excellent reconnaissance work from Sheikh Saad, and had established the fact that the bulk of the Turkish force was not on the right bank, but on the left, very strongly entrenched in a line of works which extended from the river bank in a north-westerly direction. On the right bank Nureddin had a smaller force occupying some two and a half miles of works, which were dug along the site of an ancient canal. A boat bridge connected the forces, divided by the river.

On 16th September we had to regret the loss of an aeroplane and two officers. The Naval Flotilla saw

the aeroplane come down close to the enemy's trenches, whence it had been under heavy rifle fire. It had first been seen at a height of at least 4,500 feet, gliding down. As it passed over the trenches on the left bank very heavy fire was opened. Three or four hundred men were seen to rush out of concealed trenches and surround it immediately it landed, which it did without crashing. The ships at once opened fire on it, and the crowd around it went to ground. Trusting to Nureddin's generosity and that spirit of *camaraderie* which used to exist between British and Turkish officers (but at that time, alas! was dying, owing to German intrigue), I wrote to the Turkish commander sending some money and clothes for these officers, in the hope that they were alive.

From Abu Rummànah, Major Reilly carried out the air reconnaissance I had asked for excellently well. He was supported by the gunboats, and he brought back a very fine piece of work—a map and detailed information. The appearance of large numbers of tents indicated reinforcements. It was seen that the enemy's Torres Vedras-like line of earthworks, entrenchments, and redoubts of the most modern type extended for twelve miles all told, on both banks of the river. But, as there was space enough of dry land for me to make my turning movement on the left bank, I did not change my plan of attack.

The cavalry reconnaissance showed me that the terrain was hard and good between the two marshes, and was some two miles wide. The road to this de-

file from Nakhailat village was equally good, and was fit for the three arms.

On 17th September I wired to the Army Commander, describing the results of the reconnaissances. I said that the enemy's position was a very formidable one, and told him that I proposed to make use of the two battalions of the 30th Brigade on the line of communication between Ali-al-Gharbi, and the 6th Division as a reinforcement, as all my intelligence information pointed to Nureddin Pacha having received considerable reinforcements, and there was no doubt that the position was much stronger than anything we had as yet encountered in the campaign. Thus I should need every man I could get. My request for this half brigade—under the command of Colonel Climo, who had been so useful to me at Kurna—was granted.

On 18th September I ordered the bivouac of the force to be lightly entrenched—so as to be, in fact, an entrenched camp. In this way outposts or detachments of security were economised, only small posts being installed on likely avenues of approach. I strengthened the detachment pushed out on the left bank on the bridge-head principle, and I constructed a good road towards the enemy on the right bank in order to deceive him as to the point of my intended attack.

It will have been seen that the force was already grouped for fighting in two portions—Principal Mass and Minimum Force—from the moment I

moved from Ali-al-Gharbi, though I did not actually call it so in orders.

I ordered that the existing "groups" or "brigade areas" for quartering purposes be dissolved as soon as the force advanced from this camp, as we were now within striking distance of the enemy. I also published in orders that Brigadiers should issue most strict instructions to O.C. Units that the wounded in action were to be attended to only by the stretcher-bearers. It was most essential, I pointed out, for the wounded more than others, that our force should win, and the fewer men drawn from the front line to take charge of the wounded, the greater the chance of success. In this direction, I added, there had been occasions in the campaign, notably at Shaiba, where fighting-men fell out in large numbers to assist wounded to the rear, thus endangering the result of that battle. This was utterly wrong and unpermissible, and I said that I should hold O.C. Units responsible if it occurred again. In all battles there is a lot of this kind of thing, and it is difficult to deal with, unless commanding officers are held severely responsible. There are always to be found considerable numbers of men, who, on the pretence of looking after the wounded, skulk away to the rear of the fight and do not appear again. It will be remembered by students of military history that General Colin Campbell, at the battle of the Alma, declared to the Highland Brigade that if any men fell out under the pretence of helping the wounded he would post their

name as cowards in their villages at home. Colin Campbell was an old Peninsular veteran who well knew the danger of permitting this skulking.

I directed that the hour of departure of all ships from Ali-al-Gharbi up river should be reported by the A.Q.M.G. to the S.N.O., who would arrange that a gunboat should meet and escort them past the Orah Ruins reach.

As soon as Reilly had completed his air reconnaissance and sketches I had ample and exact information. I issued Battle Instructions to the General Officers commanding the Brigades and the Senior Naval Officer, and at the same time I directed my Staff to draw up Administration Instructions, which were to be attached to my Battle Instructions and to contain directions for land and water transport and arrangements for the wounded. It was, I considered, necessary for me to issue these "general instructions," since I had not had the tactical training of the division in peace time, but had taken over the command during a campaign. I give them in full in the Appendix to Part II, as they show how closely I adhered always to the fundamental principles of war stated in the first chapter.

Owing to the excellent work of Major Reilly in his aerial reconnaissances, I had an accurate knowledge and sketch of the enemy's position and its entrenchments, which consisted of up-to-date fire trenches, main fire trenches, wing trenches, and communication ways. That section of the enemy's defences on the left bank between the Suwada marsh

and the Tigris was by far the strongest, and was well covered with a zone of barbed wire and other obstacles. It was this section that the Minimum Force would attack, moving from Nakhailat village.

Nureddin's extreme left flank, which I intended to overwhelm with my Principal Mass, consisted of entrenchments not nearly so elaborate as the main section described above. It was divided from the main section of his position by a gap of some 2,000 yards, formed by the Suwada marsh. Nureddin evidently never suspected that I should attack with a wide turning movement over six miles from the river, and it will be seen that it came as a complete surprise. He expected the usual thing with a British force. A disembarkation from the ships, an advance in two columns on the two banks of the impassable Tigris and two separated frontal attacks. He was absolutely confident of victory in his strong position. Had I attacked as he expected I must have met with a severe defeat, so strong were the works, but I had no intention of giving him a victory by such tactics. I was more than satisfied to see that he had disseminated a considerable part of his force on the right bank of the river, and, as I knew he had a bridge, I intended to demonstrate with my Principal Mass on the right bank, as if it were about to attack the enemy's position there, and then secretly in the night to convey it across the river to the left bank by the boat-bridge I should throw across east of Nakhailat. It would make a march in the night as far as the Ataba—some six miles—when it would swing to the

westward, and, passing on both sides of the Ataba Marsh, fall on the enemy's left flank and rear, moving south and rolling up his line as it advanced towards the Tigris. Nureddin's delusion that I intended to attack on both banks was started by my camp on the right bank at Sannaiyat—as I hoped it would be. I was helped also by the demonstration by the Principal Mass on the right bank towards Essinn on 26th September. This even caused Nureddin to march his General Reserve from the left bank by way of the boat-bridge to the right bank. As it turned out, had his General Reserve been behind his left wing in reasonable time—and this must have been possible had it stayed on the left bank—Delamain's turning attack would undoubtedly have been repulsed. As it was, he was held up for a while, and a very critical time set in for an hour or two before he succeeded in rolling up the left wing.

I had no water carts and not enough land transport to carry drinking water for the Principal Mass, which was a grave difficulty, for although the cavalry reconnaissance had reported the water in the Suwada Marsh as "brackish, but drinkable" in an emergency, Delamain's troops found they could not drink it, and, before they could reach the river bank that night, they had marched at least 18 miles, including a hard fight. This practically without water, and in September in Mesopotamia!

One or two small skirmishes between our Indian cavalry patrols and the hostile Arab horsemen took

place whilst we were at Abu Rummànah. One night the enemy's Thorneycroft boat, with a light gun, shelled us from up stream for a few minutes, but no damage was done.

The effects of mirage in the desert are extraordinary. It was reported to me one morning, whilst we were bivouacked at Sannaiyat, that hostile columns were approaching from the south-west. I mounted the observation tower and we distinctly saw what appeared to be a line of quarter-columns at a distance of some six miles. I ordered all the troops to get under arms at once and even put the Principal Mass in motion to take the enemy in flank. It was only a mirage! I have often seen the mirage in the desert in Egypt and the Sudan, but I never saw anything so extraordinary as this, and, although knowing all about mirage effects, I was entirely deceived.

I could not believe my eyes when I saw what were evident columns. "Nureddin is not such a fool," I said, "as to leave his beloved position, at which he and his troops have laboured ever since I took Amarah, and come into the open for me to beat him!" I was overjoyed, for it seemed that he was about to try his luck in an open battle, with no favour.

At this time I saw a good deal of the Bishop of Lahore, who had been allowed by Sir John Nixon to come up and see the force. He was staying on board the *Mosul,* hospital ship, and he often dined with me on board the *Mejidieh.* I much enjoyed talking to

him. I never met anyone so keen on seeing what active service is like; and he is one of the most popular and charming men I have ever met. He did yeoman work for me in the battle, working in a steam launch, bringing wounded back from Column "B" to the hospital ship, and risking his own life under fire. A brave and a good man, I felt deeply grateful to him, and mentioned him in my despatches.

I was delayed till the morning of 25th September for the 63rd Battery, R.F.A., which was needed with Column "B," and the 5th Hants Howitzer Battery. I would not advance till I got them, as I looked on both as vitally important, and I especially wanted Delamain to have the Howitzers to clear out the trenches on Nureddin's extreme left flank. I would not advance till those troops arrived, although I knew Nureddin was continually getting small packets of reinforcements,[24] and although the political state of affairs in Persia, I was told, required a success. I was not going to violate the principle of Economy of Force for any political reason. By 25th September these units had joined, and I was ready to advance. Accordingly I issued my operation orders for battle, which simply put into effect the General Instructions I had given to all Brigadiers and the S.N.O.—and for this reason are printed in the Appendix to Part II.

Sir John Nixon had announced his intention to be

[24] A Turkish cavalry officer and his orderly were captured in a reconnaissance about this time, and the latter gave the numbers of Nureddin as 15,000 combatants.

present at the battle. I received a wire from the M.G.G.S., dated from Amarah on 20th September, asking on what date I intended to attack Nureddin, as Sir John Nixon wished to be there. "He does not intend to interfere with your arrangements, but, in case questions of general policy have to be settled as a result of the action, he wishes to be on the spot. What date do you suggest for his arrival at Sannaiyat?" I was also asked for a gunboat to escort him up river.

I replied that I reckoned on attacking on 25th September, which was the earliest possible date I could manage, and I suggested the 24th as the date for General Nixon to arrive. I received an answer to this telegram to the effect that I must not think that General Nixon wished to precipitate my plans in any way.

On 22nd September I received a telegram from Sir John Nixon of the same date, stating that he had wired to the India Office, pointing out that the 6th Division had fought five engagements in the last eleven months, and were on the eve of a sixth. Recommendations for rewards for British officers had been telegraphed home a month before. Could not these rewards be published immediately? He had received a reply that "The Secretary of State fully appreciates grand services 6th Division and hopes Gazette will appear shortly. Meantime he wishes them a speedy and complete success to crown all their previous triumphs and assures them that their services are not forgotten."

On receipt of the telegram I published the following *communiqué* to the troops:—

"The Secretary of State has telegraphed to General Sir John Nixon, wishing the 6th Division a speedy and complete success, to crown all their previous triumphs, and to assure them that their services are not forgotten.

"In conveying this message to the troops, Major-General Townshend wishes to say that the Division has fought five engagements in the last eleven months, and has gained in the Empire a reputation second to none, be it on the banks of the Yser in Flanders or on the banks of the Tigris or Euphrates in Mesopotamia.

"There is no need for him to remind the troops of what their King and Country expect of them, and he hopes that a good blow struck now may well end their Mesopotamian labours."

On this date, I see in my diary that my combatants for the battle were 11,103. This included 711 details on their way from Amarah, who would arrive in the next day or so. Of the total number 3,148 were British and 7,955 Indians. Of the British troops the 2nd Battalion Dorset Regiment numbered 640; the 2nd Battalion Norfolks, 660; and the 1st Oxford and Bucks L. I., 756 combatants. On 24th September two seaplanes with bombs arrived, and on the 25th, Sir John Nixon, with the bulk of his staff on his steamer, the *Malamir*. He told me that he had received a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in

India, to say: *"No going beyond Kut-al-Amara."* This is interesting in view of my conversation with Sir Beauchamp Duff at Simla, given at the beginning of Chapter V. The questions arise:—When was Sir Beauchamp Duff induced to alter his mind; and who persuaded him to do so?

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA

ON 26th September, in the early grey, the orders which carried out my preliminary measures for the battle were put in motion. Everything went off to my satisfaction, Column "B" safely disembarked on the left bank below Nakhailat, the heavy guns being got into position in accordance with my General Instructions. The boat-bridge was soon in the course of construction, and Column "A" was at the Chahela Mounds on the right bank ready to demonstrate along that bank as a feint. Column "B" was to make a night advance on the 26th along the left bank towards the enemy's position in order to take up a position of assembly under cover of darkness, whence it could move forward at daybreak to attack that section of the Turkish position, Suwada Marsh—Tigris bank. The 48th Pioneers installed the heavy artillery in the positions indicated in the General Instructions, whence it would not be necessary to shift them again, since 4,500 to 5,000 yards from the enemy's works is quite close enough in the case of 4- and 5-inch guns to permit of effective support to infantry, when they are near enough to make a push for the enemy's entrenchments. The sappers

BATTLE OF KUT AL AMA

BIRDS'EYE VIEW OF BATTLE FIELD OF KUT AL
IN ORDER TO DESCRIBE THE FRONTAL
THE MINIMUM FORCE & TURNING MOVEME

ran up an observation tower for me behind the artillery position. It was very quickly put together with light timbers, and, I must say, was a very rickety and dangerous affair.

When darkness came Column "B" moved forward and installed itself in a position in readiness for the attack, taking advantage of the water-cuts and *coupures du terrain* which abounded along the bank. Fry had extended Column "B" on a front of about 1,000 yards, as I had suggested that he should.

On the morning of 27th September, the battle began, Column "A" demonstrating towards Essinn on the right bank, whilst Column "B," the Minimum Force, was soon severely engaged. All the Turkish guns on the line Suwada Marsh—Saddle Back Hill —the Tigris, opened on Column "B" as it worked its way forward, supported by the Heavy Artillery. In the evening, Fry, who carried out his instructions to the letter, had worked up his firing line to some 800 yards from the enemy's entrenchments.

At dusk I was at the bridge watching the crossing of Column "A" from the right bank to the left. As they reached the left bank the troops continued their march in column of route into the desert to carry out the turning movement of the Principal Mass. When it was dark the mixed detachment of Column "A" which had demonstrated towards Essinn on the right bank, as *en avant garde* of the Principal Mass behind it, and had dug itself in in the afternoon in order to impose on the enemy still further, was retired and brought across the bridge. I learned that a Havildar

and two or three men of the 20th Punjabis had deserted from this detachment to the Turks. This was bad news, for the enemy would learn of the manœuvre of the Principal Mass, but I hoped that they would not be brought before Nureddin till the next morning, by which time it would be too late for him to alter his dispositions to any advantage.[1]

I had ridden out to the observation tower west of Nakhailat, while it was yet dark. At daybreak, Column "B," in accordance with its instructions, executed an attack which had all the *appearance* of a decisive one, in regard to the volume and intensity of fire, but in reality was only to contain and occupy the enemy in this particular section. It was on a front of some 1,000 to 1,200 yards—greatly in excess of the ordinary frontage of a brigade. I brought up also many transport carts, etc., in the distance behind it, to induce the enemy to think that the bulk of my forces were waiting to support Column B's advance.[2] Sir John Nixon, accompanied by his staff, who had arrived at Nakhailat from Amarah in his steamer, came to my post at the tower and stayed there all day, not in any way interfering with my orders, and I carried on as if he were not present. With some senior generals this would have been an impossible state of affairs. They would have interfered, perhaps have given instructions to me; but Sir

[1] As a matter of fact Nureddin, on hearing the news, did not believe it. He was holding a conference of his senior officers at the time and thought it was a ruse of mine to send false deserters to induce him to make a mistake by moving his troops to the left flank!

[2] In the distance these carts looked like artillery or troops advancing.

John Nixon left me entirely alone. It was very seldom we even conversed, for I passed the day on the top of the rickety tower with Evans, my G.S.O., I.

General Fry's *rôle* was clearly given in my General Instructions, so I did not bother much about Column "B," whose progress was not only assisted by the heavy artillery, but also by the fire of the gunboats on the river, which were echelonned forward, so to speak. All my interest was centred on the progress of the turning attack by the Principal Mass under Delamain, for when I saw the smoke of his guns six or seven miles away to the north-west and heard a violent fire, I should know that he was assaulting the enemy's left flank and rear with the bayonet and that he would soon roll it up. I could then change the attack of Column "B" into a decisive one, and the battle would be practically won. It ought to end in a perfect rout, I thought, for the turning movement had succeeded perfectly; the night march had gone off without a hitch; I had placed my Principal Mass, by a wide sweeping manœuvre, on the enemy's flank and rear, and on that flank, moreover, which was nearest his natural line of retreat—the Baghdad road. I should now haul round the Principal Mass as a fisherman hauls in his net—and the result would be decisive. The victory ought to give great results; Nureddin's force might well be destroyed; and in that case Baghdad would be at my mercy if I were ordered to advance on it. This was what passed through my mind. But as the student of military history, and especially of Napoleon's campaigns, knows, there are

always great risks with a turning move—which is why the more cautious Moltke preferred the less risky, though less decisive, enveloping attack. I was to experience some of the risks of the turning attack myself—and calling to mind a long list of the unforeseen accidents in the history of Napoleon's campaigns which upset his turning attacks, I was not surprised at the accidents which happened to Column "A," and was able to bear them philosophically.

Between 7 and 8 a. m. I received a message from Delamain by the telephone line laid in his tracks, to say that the turning attack was developed. Curling smoke and the sound of his guns denoted his progress, but the sand-hills in the distance prevented my having a view of the action of Column "A." About 11, I got a message that he had carried the hostile trenches in front of him. I was very pleased, imagining that now he was sweeping these entrenchments from north to south, and that the Turks would soon be *à la débandade*. I learned afterwards that he had attacked the trenches frontally with two battalions, the Dorsets and the 117th Mahrattas, whilst the bulk of his force—six battalions under Brigadier-General Hoghton—had gone round the northern extremity of the Ataba Marsh, following the cavalry, in order to completely turn the Turkish extreme flank. They took so long to round the marsh that Delamain could not wait for them any longer, and so attacked with only two battalions. The whole benefit of the Mass on the enemy's weakest point was thus lost—and it went near to costing us the battle. For, al-

Plan of the Battle of Kut-al-

though Delamain, by dint of his great energy and personality, carried the extreme flank trenches, still the enemy, who outnumbered his two battalions, clung on to the other entrenchments tenaciously, as the Turkish soldier always does. Soon I had a disquieting message from Delamain that he feared he would not be able to carry the trenches! I could not understand this, as there was nothing to stop the Principal Mass if all had been united.

The struggle that took place at this decisive point of the battle was a desperate one. The Dorsets as usual covered themselves with glory, and the 117th Mahrattas also fought very well. At last the tardy appearance of Hoghton, with the bulk of the turning attack, to the westward of the enemy, i.e., in their backs, decided the struggle in favour of Delamain, and the Turks on the extreme left wing retreated to the south-west.

Thus, instead of rolling up the Turks by midday, I began to fear that it would be a long business, for hours went by, and I heard nothing from Delamain, since the telephone line had come to an end and no more messages could reach me. It proved that he had united his force again and was resting his exhausted troops, for it was a very hot day, and the water in the Suwada Marsh was brackish and not fit to drink. This was contrary to the cavalry reconnaissance report, which had said that the water was not good but that it would do at a pinch. It was a terrible disappointment to me, for now was the time that I needed the Principal Mass to fall rapidly on

the rear of the Turkish troops in the defences of the sector Suwada Marsh—Saddle Back Hill—the Tigris. In such a case, the Turks *must* run, since General Fry, with Column "B," was attacking the same entrenchment in front. I had an absolutely crushing victory in my hand if Delamain had now advanced. I sent Reilly in an aeroplane to find out what was happening. He landed by Delamain's force and I heard the whole story from him on his return. (I had no pack wireless equipment with the troops at this time, although I had a wireless installation on the *Mejidieh.*) At last I received a message from Delamain that his troops were utterly "cooked" and could not move. As they had done fourteen to fifteen miles in the desert, including a night march and severe fighting, this was not altogether surprising.

Even if the cavalry had been sent to menace the rear of the Turks it should have sufficed to put them on the move—but I could never ascertain where the cavalry had gone and what they were doing. It was 4 p. m. before Delamain got his troops going again. No one knew—I am sure none of my staff did—how very anxious I had been over the success of this turning attack, with its unaccountable delays. It was at about this time that one of our defensive posts on the Tigris sent me wires for help, as a large body of Arab and Turkish cavalry, with guns, was threatening an attack. I declined to send away a man while the battle was on, saying that I was relieving the post by winning the battle, and they must hold on.

It was getting near sunset when Delamain's force was heard to be very heavily engaged about west-south-west from my tower. We could see flashes indicating a fire of extreme violence. This was an encounter between Delamain and the Turkish General Reserve—a brigade of two or three battalions, which had marched from the right bank of the river *viâ* the Turkish bridge of boats near Kut to restore the battle on the left wing. I discovered this by means of Reilly and his aeroplane, who were invaluable to me, for I got no message from the turning attack. After a short fire-fight Delamain ordered a general advance with the bayonet. The Turks declined the shock, as they always will, when in the open and not entrenched, and retreated towards Kut.

In co-operation with the new advance of the Principal Mass I had ordered a general advance of the troops under General Fry, ordering him to turn his attack into a decisive one; but, owing to the violence of the Turkish artillery and rifle fire, he could make no progress nearer to the enemy's works on the sector Suwada—Saddle Back Hill—the Tigris than five or six hundred yards in places, and there he had dug in again.

I had ordered the Naval Flotilla to assist this advance in every way possible. I sent Captain Bastow, my aide-de-camp, in a steam launch to the Senior Naval Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Cookson, to ask if he could not make an effort to break the obstacle which the Turks had flung across the Tigris at the point where the lines of entrenchments, on both

sides of the river, reached the bank. If Cookson could break through and get to Kut, I believed he would capture the Turkish steamers. It was dusk when the gallant Cookson pushed forward with his three gunboats, himself on the *Comet,* and under a tremendous fire he endeavoured to cut the chains of what was found to be, not an obstacle, but a flying bridge, constructed of an iron lighter running on chains. Cookson was shot dead as, axe in hand, he was cutting at the cable. He had gone alongside it in a ship's dinghy, under a furious rifle fire, which riddled the funnel and upper works of the *Comet.* After the brave Cookson was killed, the gunboats fell back a little, but continued to shell the Turks from a range of some 500 yards.

As darkness descended I ordered Fry's guns to cease fire, as I was afraid they would hit Delamain's troops behind the Turks. I told Sir John Nixon, who had joined me at the observation post, that the battle was virtually won. I knew the Turks must go in the night, for they could never stay on in daylight in the hole in which they now found themselves owing to the turning movement of my Principal Mass.

"I know they'll go in the dark," I repeated to General Nixon, as I left the observation post to return to my headquarters at Nakhailat, after ordering Fry to ascertain by patrols in the night if the Turks were still there and telling him that he must assault the position at daylight if they had not left it, *coute que coute.* I was certain the Turkish force on the right

bank would also retreat when the main force on the left was going.

I was right in all my surmises; at daylight I received news that the defences were abandoned. The Turks had all escaped by the river bank in the night, passing in front of the Principal Mass under Delamain. They had carried off most of their guns, but seventeen remained in our hands, with 1,289 prisoners.

The Turks lost 1,700 killed and wounded; and our casualties were 1,229 killed and wounded.

The Battle of Kut-al-Amara can be said to have been one of the most important in the history of the British Army in India. There had been nothing of its magnitude either in the Afghan War or the Indian Mutiny, for it was fought against troops equally well armed and of equal numbers to ourselves. In addition we ejected them from a very strong and up-to-date position commanding ground as flat and as open as a billiard-table with nothing to check their fire-sweep.

I was informed that the Arab and Turkish cavalry had retreated from their attack on the post at Sannaiyat on hearing that the Turks were defeated in the battle, but they had captured and burnt two coal and oil barges. This was very bad news for me, as it would cripple the movement of my steamers. I lost no time in getting out my orders for the pursuit.

Before "B" Column was embarked it was late in the afternoon of the 29th, for it took a great part of

the day to collect the 18th Brigade and the 63rd Battery and get them on board ship. The embarkation took hours—to my great discontent.

I had sent General Delamain to occupy the town of Kut. General Hoghton's brigade was to camp on the river-bank, somewhere in the bend south of Saddle Back Hill, in order to evacuate wounded and gather arms, etc.; he was then to follow Delamain into Kut. I had determined to conduct the pursuit myself for reasons very similar to those which had actuated me in the pursuit after the battle of Kurna. There were many considerations to be taken into account. If, for example, I managed to overtake the Turks on the march in my ships I could break them up and keep them off the river, to which they must come for water. In this way I might turn an orderly retreat into a rout, as I did in the pursuit after Kurna; and in that case I might even enter Baghdad with the fugitives, as I had entered Amarah. Bluff might well come in a second time. But, if the Turks managed to stand and rally in the prepared position of Ctesiphon, which was said to be very strong, I could haul off my brigade in my ships and return to Kut without loss of prestige and there consolidate my position.

It was impossible to entrust the solution of such complicated questions to a subordinate, questions which only I could judge what I should or should not do. This is why I left Delamain at Kut to reorganise the division, not to come on unless I sent for him. But there is a great difference between theory

and practice in war, and between criticism and execution. There was very little water in the river, and there were plenty of shoals to negotiate at this time of year. We stuck a whole day quite close to Kut, one ship after another running aground. It was nearly *two days* (of great toil) before we got clear of Kut, and then it was too late. The Turks had retreated in good order along both banks of the Tigris; they had fought perfectly steadily and well, and I found that I had quite different troops to deal with at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara from those which had taken part in the Battle of Kurna and the advance on Amarah (where the Turkish force consisted entirely of Arab battalions, with the exception of one Turkish regular battalion). If the Turks had fled in rout after the Battle of Kut-al-Amara, as they did after Kurna, it had been my intention, as I have already said, to seize the opportunity of following them into Baghdad in gunboats.

Roughly speaking, it was the same distance from Kut-al-Amara to Baghdad as the pursuit from Kurna to Amarah had been—about ninety miles. But this pursuit was a very different matter. The Turks were retreating in solid bodies and in good order; the river was at its shallowest; we remained aground at times for half a day; and it soon became evident that the Turks would rally in their prepared position at Ctesiphon. There could be no question of my entering Baghdad as I entered Amarah—along with a routed enemy.

I won the battle of Kut-al-Amara by the turning

manœuvre alone. Had I attempted a frontal attack with only a slight overlapping envelopment I should inevitably have been repulsed. The turning attack by the Principal Mass—the decisive attack itself, that is to say—had hung painfully in the balance at one time in the afternoon of 28th September. General Delamain told me at Azizieh, afterwards, that he felt it his duty to let me know that he did not think his Indian troops would storm trenches again if put at them, and the success of the turning attack had depended greatly on the battalion of the Dorset Regiment, which as usual had performed prodigies of valour. It must be remembered that, prior to the actions of Kurna and Kut-al-Amara, the Sixth Division fought the battles of Sahil and Shaiba, in the latter of which it had been very severely tried —for a long time the issue of that battle had hung in the balance. In addition to this, the Battle of Kurna and the advance, in the hottest season of the year, to Amarah, with the subsequent advance on Kut in the still great heat of early September, had greatly tried the health of the troops; large numbers of men had been sent to the base hospitals; and there was an air of staleness over the force. Thus I was not surprised by what Delamain told me. In all armies the troops of the offensive must be changed frequently.

From want of land transport, my cavalry were practically tied to the ships, and so they accomplished little in the pursuit. And here I must remark on the great drawback of caste prejudices in Indian troops as regards the conduct of war in countries beyond

India. When I asked the O.C. cavalry why he had not pushed on and got into contact with the retreating enemy, he told me that he had not been able to bring the *cooking-pots* with him owing to our want of transport, and that his Sikhs and Hindus would not use the Arab cooking-pots found in the villages to prepare their food. I state this fact, not as a criticism of the valour of the Indian cavalry, whose record no one appreciates more highly than I, but in order to emphasise the disadvantages of using them in foreign countries.

I had no British cavalry at this juncture, as the 14th Hussars did not join me until December. If even one British cavalry regiment had been attached to my forces at that time, I should have been able to inflict severe loss on the Turks in their retreat. As it was they were unmolested—and all for the sake of some cooking-pots!

On arrival, on 3rd October, at Azizieh, a small village and telegraph station on the left bank of the Tigris, some sixty miles up river from Kut-al-Amara, I received Major Reilly's aerial reconnaissance report. The retreating Turks had halted at the prepared position of Ctesiphon and were already installed in that formidable defence-work, astride the river, and on both banks—as they had been at Kut-al-Amara. Reilly reported six miles of entrenchments on the left bank, where the principal works were situated. There were also three steamers, six large iron lighters, and many men and storehouses.

On my arrival at Azizieh I received a wireless tele-

gram from the M.G.G.S., in which he gave me an appreciation of the situation sent by Sir John Nixon to the Chief of the General Staff in India. In this Sir John described my pursuit operations and mentioned that the Turks were retreating in two columns, with their ships ahead of them. He remarked on the position that the Turkish Commander-in-Chief had prepared since early in June at Ctesiphon, and stated that the Turks were falling back upon it. Of course, I had been reporting all this to Nixon during my pursuit, but I differed from his appreciation in the statement that the Turks were not likely to receive any material reinforcements from Baghdad or beyond, with the exception of possibly 1,500 infantry and two guns from the Euphrates line.

Nixon also stated in his appreciation that there were two courses open to us:

(1) To discontinue the pursuit;

(2) To press on with our ships and gunboats and keep in touch with the enemy, harassing his retreat as much as possible in order to prevent him from making a further stand.

He said that, if the Turks should make a stand, the pursuing troops could reconnoitre his position with aeroplanes, while the remaining brigades and the divisional troops could be sent up to join me. He considered that the pursuit, slow though it had been owing to unavoidable circumstances caused by the peculiar difficulties of navigation in shallow channels,

would have a demoralising effect on the Turks and a correspondingly favourable one on the inhabitants of the portion of Mesopotamia in the hands of the British. He estimated the Turkish force at 4,000 bayonets, 500 sabres and 20 guns.

I find in my diary for 3rd October the following remarks: "The Army Commander does not seem to realise the weakness and danger of his line of communications. We are now some 380 miles from the sea, and we have only two weak divisions, including my own, in the country! There is my division to do the fighting, and Gorringe's to hold the line of communications from Kut to the sea. Thus there is no possible support to give me if I receive a check."

It seemed to me that it was useless to continue the pursuit any longer, so I decided to halt, to land the 18th Brigade and its battery at Azizieh, and to report to Sir John Nixon, who was at Kut, that in my opinion we ought to return to that place and consolidate. Since Sir John was on the spot it was necessary for me to ascertain his views on the question of my return. Had he been at Amarah or Basra, I should have returned to Kut without asking, for I was now absolutely against a further advance unless I had two divisions—an army corps—under my command. Accordingly I sent the famous telegram which has been so much discussed in both Houses of Parliament and in the press.

I first wrote this report, intending to send it by my aide-de-camp. But the Arabs were attacking convoys along the Tigris, and, as I feared that it

might fall into the hands of the enemy, I wired it. It was addressed to General Nixon's Chief of Staff, and was sent from Azizieh on 3rd October.

It is as follows:—

"By the aviator's report attached, you will see that the chance of breaking up the retreating Turkish forces, which by now have taken up a position at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon), no longer exists. That position is astride the Baghdad road and the Tigris, and it is estimated to be six miles of entrenchments. . . . My opinion, if I may be allowed to express one, is that up to the battle of Kut our object has been to occupy the strategical position of Kut and to consolidate ourselves in the *vilayet* (province) of Basra. Ctesiphon is now held by the defeated Turkish forces. Should it not be considered politically advisable by the Government to occupy Baghdad at present on account of the doubtful situation at the Dardanelles, and the possibility of our small force being driven out of Baghdad by strong forces from Anatolia, which would compel us to retire down a long line of communications (Baghdad to the sea is some 400 miles), teeming with Arabs, at present more or less hostile, whose hostility would become active on hearing of our retreat, then I consider that on all military grounds we should consolidate our position at Kut. The sudden fall of water, which made the advance of our ships most difficult, slow and toilsome, upset our plans of entering Baghdad on the heels of the Turks while they were retreating in dis-

order. If, on the other hand, it is the desire of the Government to occupy Baghdad, then, unless great risk is to be run, it is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary that the advance from Kut by road should be carried out methodically by two Divisions or one Army Corps, or by one Division supported closely by another complete Division, exclusive of the garrisons of the important places of Nasiriyeh, Ahwaz and Amarah. . . ."

In my diary of 3rd October, 1915, at Azizieh, I wrote my Appreciation of the Situation after the Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

"1. In the case where Government does not contemplate occupying Baghdad our principal objective was the occupation of Kut-al-Amara, in order to consolidate the Basra Vilayet, and because from a strategic point of view Kut, at the junction of the Tigris and Shatt-al-Hai (which joins the Euphrates at Nasiriyeh), was more desirable than Amarah. Such were the reasons, I understand, that led to my operations against Nureddin Pacha. In order to do this, I had to defeat him and possibly destroy his force of nothing under 9,000 or 10,000 men.

"Nureddin Pacha has been heavily defeated, and is in full retreat on Baghdad—or rather, he will occupy the already prepared position at Ctesiphon (Salman Pak), which is the position which defends Baghdad.

"If the Government does not intend at present to advance on Baghdad:

"(*a*) Owing possibly to the very doubtful situation and hopes of success of our forces at the Dardanelles;

"(*b*) The impossibility of sending another division to Mesopotamia, which would be the minimum force necessary to enable us to advance with security against Baghdad. To try a *coup de main* against Baghdad with my division alone—a distance of some 380 miles from the sea, the line of communications being occupied by utterly unreliable and hostile Arab tribes, who would all rise at the first news of the slightest check, and the only support being a weak division with no artillery whatever, which is, moreover, disseminated at Amarah, Nasiriyeh, Kurna, Basra, Ahwaz, etc.—would be, in my opinion, an unpardonable error or worse, not only from a strategical and tactical point of view, but also from a political one. A defeat would mean possibly a great disaster, which would shake the stability of India, and anyone advocating such a step would show in my opinion that he was utterly ignorant of the Art of War.

"(*c*) Success in the Dardanelles is essential to our entering Baghdad, *with the present force we have in Mesopotamia*—two very weak divisions without even their proper proportion of field artillery.

"Taught by the experience of their fatal retreat from Kurna to Amarah, when their disseminated force was practically destroyed by us and where the Arabs massacred many Turkish soldiers who straggled, the forces of Nureddin are retiring in good order and in solid bodies with a proper rearguard.

"That he is not broken up in this retreat is owing

solely to the fact that there is hardly any water in the river. We have lost practically two days—stuck on shoals and mud-banks. As an example I advanced only eight miles yesterday. The escaping Turkish steamers, having thrown overboard all cargo and impedimenta and cut adrift mahelas, have crossed the shoals. The Turks are endowed by nature with strong knees and at this moment are entering their strong position at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon).

"Wellington once remarked in a letter to Lord Liverpool, that if he had done all that was expected of him by Government and the Press, he would have been ere this in the moon; no one can deal with obstacles of nature of such a description as ships drawing more water than there is in bad pieces of channel. One of my two gunboats has had to be left behind, hopelessly stuck near Baghailah. She has wrenched and weakened the deck plates of her 12-pounder in the battle, and cannot guarantee to fire another 20 rounds! These are obstacles which cannot be overcome speedily. Had there been ordinary conditions of water, such as prevailed up to the time we reached Sannaiyat before the battle, we could have entered Baghdad with the fugitives, and we could have broken them up hopelessly. But the sudden fall of the water has prevented this.

"Even if we had done this, the Turkish Government at Constantinople would surely send a formidable force to retake Baghdad, since they are holding their own in the Dardanelles, and apparently even have the advantage. Then the Government of India

would have to contemplate a retreat, which would be worse than that from Kabul in the 'forties, from every point of view.

"If we go to Baghdad we must stay there. That is certain.

"2. In the case where Government decide to occupy Baghdad: Our principal objective would be to defeat the Turks in their position at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon), which covers Baghdad. To do this, I consider that we require another division in the country, and that two divisions—i.e., an Army Corps—should advance from Kut-al-Amara by *land,* as the river question renders ship-transport impossible. (Only empty ships can get up). I say two divisions, as we must make an absolute certainty of success, and not take risks.

"Nureddin has already some 5,000 men left and 20 guns, and all available reinforcements will be sent him."

It was evident to me that Sir John Nixon intended me to make a dash for Baghdad with my present inadequate force. It has been seen how I regarded the act of taking the offensive in a secondary theatre of the war with minimum forces. I was certain that such a violation of the principle of Economy of Force must result in disaster. In addition, I had just experienced a critical battle, which I had only won by superior tactics of manœuvre to that of my adversary. I had beaten Nureddin by skill of manœuvre alone. Had I attacked him frontally, I should have

experienced a disastrous defeat; and, as it was, victory hung in the balance for some hours. I had been very anxious, although I flatter myself that even my staff and Sir John Nixon had not been aware of my anxiety.

I deliberated long before I sent the telegram quoted on pages 202 and 203. It was not discipline to *protest*. My long experience of the army, and, in particular, my acquaintance with military history, told me that if I considered that the mission I was given might entail disaster to my country, my duty was to warn my superior; and, having done so, I was ready to carry out any order given to me. In particular I called to mind Wellington's explanation at the Court of Enquiry after the Convention of Cintra in 1808, in Portugal. Like him, I did the utmost a subordinate general can do by pointing out to my superior general the rashness of the undertaking; if he thought differently from me it was my duty to do anything in my power to carry out his orders, even though I differed entirely with him as to the wisdom of such an operation. Herein lies the great distinction between military and civil subordinate situations. If, in a civil office, the subordinate differs materially from the superior, he ought to resign; but in military or naval appointments it is the duty of the subordinate commander to assist his superior in the manner in which that superior may deem his services most advantageous. That is the principle on which I acted in this affair, and on which I should act on a future occasion, if necessary. I remembered

also that the Commander-in-Chief in India had agreed with me in Simla two or three months previously, when he said: "Not one inch shall you go beyond Kut-al-Amara unless I make you up to 30,000 or 40,000 men."

Supposing I were successful in winning the coming battle of Ctesiphon and occupying Baghdad, how long should I, with my weak force, still further weakened by the battle, be able to remain there in face of the great effort which the Germans and Turks would surely make to retake it with large forces from the Caucasus? No, I should have been directed to take Baghdad only if the expedition to Gallipoli were successful. And at the same time I should have been given an adequate force to do so.

In connection with my action in pointing out to Sir John Nixon that my force was inadequate, I had the case of Marshal MacMahon in 1870 in my mind. It will be remembered that, after his defeat at Wörth, he was organising an army at Chalons, when he was ordered by the Government to advance to relieve Bazaine locked up in Metz. He replied that in his opinion he ought to unite all the forces available in France in a position covering Paris. Government repeated the order, MacMahon advanced accordingly, and was annihilated at Sedan.

Here I would explain to civilian readers that, generally speaking, there is a distinct difference between lines of communication and lines of operations. Lines of operations are the general directions or

routes followed by an army in its advance, when moving from its base to its objective, while lines of communications are the land and water ways by means of which that army is fed and supplied. At times the line of communications differs considerably from a line of operations—when, for example, an army has to manœuvre in order to fight on a wide extent of front. However, in the Mesopotamian campaign our line of communications and line of operations were one and the same. As in the Nile Expedition, the Nile road and river were our one line of advance and supply, so in Mesopotamia the Tigris was our one means of food supply; and the road lay, as in the case of the Nile, always alongside the river. In addition, in the case of the Tigris, owing to the enormous floods, one could only march along the bank from towards the end of August to about March.

I had food for serious reflection in the fact that our line of communications, when I reached Azizieh, was some 320 miles in length, while my one weak division after the battle of Kut-al-Amara mustered only some 10,000 or 11,000 combatants, instead of 13,000—the complement of an Indian division. The long line of communications lay through a country of hostile Arabs, who never refrained from firing at our convoys, even when we had progressed past them up river, and would all rise, from Kut to Kurna, if once our little force were checked. It was guarded only by the two weak brigades of infantry which composed the 12th Division, which was not only scattered all

the way from Basra to Kut-al-Amara, but in addition supplied the garrisons for Nasiriyeh, Ahwaz and Amarah—very important posts.

It may be interesting to recall that the length of Napoleon's line of communications, when he entered Moscow in 1812, from the Niemen, was 570 miles. Two hundred and thirteen thousand men actually marched with the Emperor. The remainder of the 600,000 men garrisoned Germany, especially the east of that country, and guarded the line of communications to France. Napoleon's 213,000 men traversed and occupied 70,000 square miles. In 1870, when the German armies sat down in front of Paris, they had 190 miles of line of communications between them and the German frontier. Four hundred and seventy-five thousand men occupied and traversed 20,000 square miles. No argument is required to show which of the arrangements was the sounder, so far as regards the art of war. In no way could such a disaster have happened to Moltke as arrived to Napoleon.

What can be said of the risk run in my case? No other troops whatever but the two weak brigades holding the line of communications were in the country. Remember that we had as an enemy the Turk, armed as well as we were, as regards guns and rifles, plentifully supplied with ammunition, unsurpassed by any soldier when on the defensive and entrenched. This was quite unlike the enemy we encountered in the Nile expeditions of 1886 or of 1896-1898, where we had only to meet untrained and undisciplined

hordes of Dervishes, with no guns. Finally, my proportion of British infantry was low; I had only three battalions, each reduced to the size of half a battalion. On them I relied for victory, both at Kut-al-Amara and at Ctesiphon. My force was considered—and I have no doubt that it was—superior to the Turkish in the open, but there can be no denying that it was dangerously small.

There was every indication that the Allied forces in the Gallipoli theatre had shot their bolt and that the Turks were containing them with no great difficulty, thanks to their excellent defensive position. It was clear that they could now spare troops from their principal theatre in Europe to save Baghdad in their secondary theatre. Besides, a strategic offensive must be kept up to high-water mark in men, guns, stores, munitions, transport, food, etc. We had to advance in a country where the heat is appalling—there is no other word for it—and consequently a constant stream of sick men was being sent down river to overflow the hospitals at Basra and Bombay.

Why did we assume the offensive with a force barely sufficient to hold what we had captured? It was as so often happens in war. Political motives are introduced by a government, and they often override strategical ones. The result when they are allowed to do so is almost always disaster. Had Napoleon not allowed politics to interfere with strategy in 1813, he would have won the war. But he permitted 200,000 of his good troops to remain locked up in northern Spain fighting Wellington in a

secondary theatre while he was fighting for existence in his principal theatre.

Now—to resume my story after this digression—I determined to land the 18th Infantry Brigade and the field battery and install them in the village of Azizieh. Before doing so, however, I received another wire from the M.G.G.S. that: "Everything points to your having to turn the Turks out of Salman Pak (Ctesiphon) position. Please report from Azizieh whether you propose to concentrate your division, and if so, where? Azizieh would be quite suitable from aeroplane point of view as our machines could then visit Baghdad. It is reported that they have already had a most disturbing effect on the enemy. It seems desirable to form an advanced depot wherever you concentrate and return all ships and barges to Kut to refill."

At 9 p. m. on 3rd October, I received an answer from the M.G.G.S. to my telegram of the same date in which I pointed out the necessity of my being given two divisions if I were required to take Baghdad. He observed that I did not appear to take into account the appreciation of the situation by Sir John Nixon as regards the Turkish force, which in all probability would encounter me at Ctesiphon (4,000 bayonets, 500 sabres, and 20 guns); that this force was inferior in *moral* and strength to that which I had defeated at Kut-al-Amara. "The position is not nearly as strong. It is the Army Commander's intention to open the way to Baghdad, as he understands that another division will be sent from France.

He would like to know your plan of operations for effecting this object with the force you have at Kut-al-Amara, plus four squadrons and a horse artillery battery." There was no longer any doubt that Sir John Nixon had resolved to disregard my warning and thought that my present force, with the addition of four squadrons of cavalry and a battery of horse artillery, was sufficient. There was no chance of the division from France being in time; it had probably not even started. On the other hand, my adversary was certain to be heavily and quickly reinforced by troops from the armies in the Caucasus descending the Tigris *viâ* Mosul.

It seemed to me that it was useless to try to argue any longer. Many generals in the Indian and British armies, who have learnt the science of war in savage warfare against uncivilised and badly armed people, and have not made long study of the great principles of Napoleon and their adaptation by Moltke and later by the French General Staff, would say that Nixon was quite right to try to push me into Baghdad. Sir John Nixon was an excellent Commander-in-Chief for savage wars. He continually told me he had great confidence in my ability and skill—proof of which is that he always gave me the sole conduct and command in battle, and made me draw up the projects or plans of operations, when he had an ample staff for that purpose. When he saw that by warning him I had doubts of success, I am of the opinion that he should have taken command himself and used me under him in the battle.

I replied to the M.G.G.S. the same night, saying that I had certainly taken Sir John Nixon's estimation of the hostile force into consideration, but that my information pointed to a larger Turkish force at Ctesiphon. However, he had not mentioned the arrival in Mesopotamia of a division from France. I said also that I would wire my project of operations on the morrow as it required careful attention; that I should concentrate at Azizieh; and that the remainder of my force must unite with me there by route march, so that all the ships might be available for supplies and munitions.

My naval flotilla had ceased to exist since the *Shaitan* had failed to pass Baghaila owing to shallow water and the *Comet's* deck plates had worked loose, so that she could not use her 12-pounder gun.

On 3rd October, Sir John Nixon wired to the Government of India—sending a copy to me—that it was probable Nureddin would stand and fight at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon), and that he considered he was strong enough to open the road to Baghdad, and with this intention he intended to concentrate at Azizieh. He continued that families of German and of Turkish officials were said to be leaving Baghdad for Aleppo, and added that it was highly desirable to capture the enemy's steamers, which at this season could not get far up stream of Baghdad.

Telegram to M.G.G.S.:

"4th October, 1915.

"My project of operations is as follows:—

"Preliminary to concentrating whole force at Azizieh I shall install 18th Brigade there. Sixteenth Brigade with its own land transport at Shidhaif Ash Sharqui bend. Seventeenth Brigade at Shadi. All troops moving by route march. Divisional Troops, including heavy batteries, cavalry, and H.A. battery at Azizieh. With the above dispositions I can unite all my force in a day and a half should enemy move to attack isolated brigade at Azizieh, and at the same time I mystify Nureddin as to my offensive intentions, while I can rapidly advance and unite, should he retreat from Salman Pak on Baghdad. I want 21 days' supplies and ammunition put down at Azizieh for whole force. This 21 days' supplies not to be touched till I move forward by march on Salman Pak.

"My general directing idea will be to turn the enemy's left, i.e., east flank, and rear, only attacking that sector of his position extending from main road to Baghdad inclusive. All his position to the west of main road to be ignored. If he stand again at Diala I treat that in precisely the same way. Column "A" and cavalry would cross the Diala River three miles north of Diala. I shall want all land transport you can get me, as asked for previous to the action at Kut. I trust that, as you have decided on forward move, you are taking all steps to hire camels, donkeys, mahelas, etc.

"After installing Fry's brigade at Azizieh I shall return with the ships to Kut to hasten matters."

On 5th October I disembarked the 18th Infantry Brigade and 63rd Field Battery under General Fry, and installed them at Azizieh village, which is on the left bank of the Tigris. I ordered Fry to make an entrenched camp round the village and also to entrench a battalion at the neck of the loop of the Tigris, four miles below and south-west of Azizieh village. I gave directions for a permanent cavalry post to be stationed one mile up stream of Azizieh and an aerodrome to be started.

I wired to General Delamain, who was commanding at Kut, to send me up twenty-one days' supplies for my whole force, which I should magazine at Azizieh and not touch till I advanced, while I also wanted fourteen days' supplies on ships against Ctesiphon, and as much ammunition as I could get.

I said I wanted my 1,500 casualties at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara made good, and I asked for the same demi-brigade of the 12th Division as I had at that battle as a general reserve, the full brigade to be given me if possible.

I told General Delamain that I should echelon the division by brigades along the river at intervals of one full day's march, so that I could unite my division at any time in a day and a half. Aerial reconnaissance would give me at least that notice before I could be attacked by superior forces, and at the same time the echelon system would mystify Nureddin as to my intentions. If it were decided that we should not advance beyond Kut I could retire in echelon in

the same way, and remain practically as united as if I had the whole force in my hand at Azizieh.

To retire with the whole force united *en bloc* would look to the Arabs like a retreat, and for this reason I regarded the keeping of my force echeloned out on the concertina principle as most important.

I decided to make Azizieh my headquarters, as all aerial and other reconnaissance reports would be conveniently to hand there, and because a general commanding should be with his advanced guard in all offensive operations in order to make rapid decisions.

On 5th October, a seaplane reconnoitred Ctesiphon, and reported it unoccupied. The observer said he could see no troops, lighters, or storehouses there, but he thought he saw a column about four miles south of the Diala River going northwards.

I wired for Reilly to verify this report. He took the air at once and returned at 5.30 p. m. to me at Azizieh. He had flown over Ctesiphon at 5 p. m., and he reported that the position was undoubtedly occupied. He saw four large paddle-steamers, lighters, mahelas, storehouses, and at least 3,000 or 4,000 men; a steamer and two barges with troops on board were at Zeur Bend, about fourteen miles west-north-west of Azizieh; and he saw tents evidently covered with leaves and straw. Altogether his report was at direct variance with the seaplane's.

I reported this to the M.G.G.S. and also proposed to G.H.Q. to use the word "Ctesiphon," not "Salman Pak," in telegrams, since the latter was a devoted servant of the Prophet. His tomb is at Ctesiphon,

and out of regard for the feelings of Mohammedans I thought it would be better not to make use of his name.

I sent a cavalry reconnaissance to clear up the news about Zeur Bend.

I found that Sir John Nixon's Staff began to order measures, etc., to such an extent that I sent a telegram on 6th October, from Azizieh, asking "if the Army commander is commanding this operation in person, or if he intends me to command, as I did at Kut-al-Amara." The answer—that I was of course to command the Sixth Division as before—seemed to me evasive, for in the previous operations I had commanded more than the Sixth Division.

During my advance from Kut to Azizieh I received the following copies of telegrams of congratulation upon my victory at Kut-al-Amara, sent to me by Sir John Nixon:—

"Army Commander most heartily congratulates you and your division on the decisive result achieved by your plan during the operations. He cannot praise too highly the bold offensive action of General Delamain nor sufficiently express his great admiration of the gallant conduct of his troops."

In repeating the above message of the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia to my troops I added that, throughout the trying time in the battle, owing to the absence of news of Column "A," I had felt quite tranquil in my mind, as I knew the value of the 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades and of all arms com-

posing Column "A." I referred particularly to the magnificent work of the batteries. I also added that it must not be forgotten that the success of Column "A" was made possible by the tenacity and steadiness of Column "B," to which I tendered my grateful thanks. I also thanked the Senior Naval Officer for the gallant and strenuous co-operation of the Royal Navy in the battle and for the constant vigilance of the gunboat crews and their ceaseless watches by night and day—and I deplored the death in action of the gallant Lieutenant-Commander Cookson, R.N.

The following telegram was received by me from the Assistant Military Secretary, I.E.F., "D," dated 1st October, 1915:—

"The Army Commander has much pleasure in forwarding the following message received from Chief General Staff. Begins: 'Thirtieth September S/22912, Chief (i.e., Commander-in-Chief, India) sends you, Townshend, and Delamain and all the forces concerned, his heartiest congratulations on the very successful operations at Kut-al-Amara. He is deeply grieved to hear your unavoidable losses, and trusts the wounded are all doing well.' "

The King telegraphed to Sir John Nixon, as follows:—

"I warmly congratulate you and my troops under your command upon the marked success which they have achieved under difficult and trying conditions. I trust the sick and wounded are doing well."

Sir John Nixon's reply ran:—

"I present my humble duty to the King and express, on behalf of myself and His Majesty's troops under my command, the deep sense of honour and gratitude with which His Majesty's kind words of appreciation and sympathy have been received here by all ranks. Sick and wounded well and it is hoped many will be back in the ranks shortly. Spirit of troops splendid."

The copy of a telegram from the Viceroy of India to Sir John Nixon was also forwarded to me at the same time: "I warmly congratulate you on the great success of the operations at Kut-al-Amara. Please express to General Townshend and all officers and men under his command my very warm appreciation of their courage and devotion, which have secured so striking a success. I trust the wounded are doing well and have every comfort that is possible under existing difficult conditions."

The following copy of a reply to H.E. The Viceroy from Sir John Nixon was attached:—"Your Excellency's kind congratulations are highly appreciated by all, and, on behalf of General Townshend and the troops under his command, I beg to offer our warmest thanks for your inspiriting words. Am glad to say wounded are doing well and it is expected that a certain number will recover here and rejoin ranks."

I should like to mention here an act of generosity to me by Sir John Nixon. On October the 7th he received the following telegram through the Viceroy

of India, from the Secretary of State for India, with regard to the victory of Kut-al-Amara:—

"I much regret to learn of the loss of Lieut.-Commander Cookson. Will you kindly convey to General Sir John Nixon my congratulations on the further brilliant success which has been achieved by force 'D.' "

Sir John Nixon sent the following reply to the Viceroy:—

"I shall be very glad if you will kindly communicate the following telegram to Secretary of State:—

" 'Your kind and inspiriting message of thirtieth was delayed and only received to-day, and, on behalf of General Townshend and the Sixth Division, to whom full credit for the victory belongs, I desire to say how deeply it is appreciated by them and me.' "

At the same time I received a wire from the M.G.G.S. from Kut to say that from a statement in the House of Commons it would appear that the Cabinet acquiesced in the pursuit—though what the House of Commons had to do with my tactical pursuit after a victory I could not make out.

The cavalry reconnaissance to Zeur, fourteen miles up river of Azizieh and an equal distance below Ctesiphon, established the fact that Nureddin had pushed forward a detachment of security to Zeur. Here it was entrenched. Its strength was reported

to be one regiment of Turkish cavalry, three battalions of infantry and two field guns. This mixed detachment was installed some two miles inland from the river bank north-east of Zeur. As two steamers were moored to the bank, I supposed it was on covering service for the main body, in position at Ctesiphon, and would retire when I advanced in force.

In consequence of this report I ordered Generals Delamain and Hoghton to unite their brigades with the 18th Brigade at Azizieh as soon as possible so as to be prepared for all eventualities.

This Turkish covering force corresponded with the information of the secret service that Nureddin had called in a Turkish detachment from Hilla, which he might have done with advantage prior to the Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

PART III

CTESIPHON

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD

GENERAL DELAMAIN'S command, which consisted of the 16th Infantry Brigade, 3 field batteries, Maxim battery, 22nd Co. Sappers and Miners, and half the Divisional Ammunition Column, joined me at Azizieh on 9th October. Hoghton, doing double marches, was due on the 11th.

Delamain's brigade mustered but 1,508 combatants, of whom the Dorsets numbered only 297. In the course of conversation with me in my quarters at Azizieh, Delamain told me that his Indian troops were not what they had been before the battle of Kut-al-Amara. He said that when he assaulted the northern trenches of the hostile position in that battle he found some of his Indian troops without spirit, though one battalion did very well, losing 45 per cent. of its numbers in the assault. He added that he was convinced that, if they had to assault solidly-held trenches again, his troops would not succeed. They were worn out and needed rest. They knew that the distance from Azizieh to the sea was over 300 miles, and they were beginning to wonder what was to be the end of it all.

"This is not pleasant hearing," I comment in my diary, "but it is true. The British troops can be relied on as before, but the Indians are now shaken and unreliable."

About the end of October, Indian recruits at last began to arrive to fill up the ranks of the Sixth Division. I have never seen such a wretched class of recruits in the whole of my Indian experience, and the battalion commanders did not mince their words in the matter. There were also troubles as regards the Mohammedan element in the Indian troops at this time. There existed a wide-spread spirit of unwillingness to advance against the Holy Place of Salman Pak, the tomb of a devoted servant of the Prophet, at Ctesiphon. In this connection I had to send back to Basra one Indian battalion, composed in the bulk of trans-Border men of the North-west of India, owing to numerous cases of desertion to the enemy. It was a danger to my force, and I declined to have it any longer in my command.

It cost me a lot to come to this decision, seeing that at the most I should be unable to bring more than 8,600 bayonets into the field for battle. When I moved forward my force would muster some 14,000 combatants all told, but these figures included artillerymen, engineers, wireless telegraphy men, sailors, signal company men, and so forth. But it was on the infantry that I relied to win the battle.

From Azizieh I made repeated efforts to induce Headquarters at Basra to send back to my battalions the scores of British soldiers, of the Norfolks, Dor-

sets, and Oxfords, who were employed in every imaginable kind of billet in Basra—as police in the city, extra clerks, batmen for officers (including staff officers of the Indian Army, who were not entitled to British soldiers as servants), improvised chauffeurs for a regular fleet of motor launches, marines on gunboats, extra hands to strengthen crews of reservist bluejackets—all taken from the bayonets of my division! But, in spite of the most strenuous efforts, I managed to get back very few of those thus employed.

My three British battalions were the backbone of my division. I relied on them for victory—and they were at a strength of less than half a battalion each. To add to my troubles, beriberi broke out at Azizieh, carrying off about forty of my British soldiers.

My experiences in this campaign have convinced me that the proportion of one British battalion to three Indian ones per brigade of an Indian division of three brigades is dangerous in warfare under modern conditions with a civilised enemy organised, trained, and armed as well as we are. Such a proportion may be fully successful against uncivilised tribesmen or savages, ill-organised and without artillery; it may even suit war conditions generally in India. But to have to assault strong positions held by the most tenacious of all soldiers in Europe or Asia when on the defensive and in entrenchments—the Turk—required a proportion of two British battalions to two Indian in each brigade. I suggest that a far better system than the present one would be to have

three homogeneous brigades in a division—one all-British brigade of four British battalions under a British service brigadier-general, and two Indian brigades of four Indian battalions each under Indian service brigadiers. To my mind this is a far better arrangement in every way for times of both peace and war in India—that is to say, if the Indian budget cannot afford such an establishment as a proportion of two British battalions and two Indian ones in each brigade.

On 9th October I received an assurance from G.H.Q., that I should be equipped with first and second-line transport complete—that is, the Sixth Division and cavalry brigade supply columns complete. This was in answer to my demands.

On 10th October, I had a telegram from the M.G.G.S. from which I inferred that sanction had not been received by the Government of India from home with regard to my advance on Baghdad, and at the same time made it clear to me that my warnings, as to reinforcements being necessary if I had to take Baghdad, were being considered. "Following received from Viceroy, dated 10th October, to Sir John Nixon: 'The Secretary of State wires that he hopes to give me definite information as to reinforcements, and that meanwhile you should retain your present position, and be prepared to advance if reinforcements asked for can be sent you. He asks me to instruct you accordingly. Please regard this as official instruction. I hope very much that the required troops will be forthcoming and that advance will not

be much delayed.' Ends. The Army Commander has replied as follows: Begins: 'Your Excellency's wire of 10th has been communicated at once to General Townshend, who may be trusted not to commit himself without absolute military necessity.' Ends." (This last sentence made it clear that I was an independent commander, and would be held responsible.) The M.G.G.S. went on to say that perhaps, in view of the above, I might think it advisable to echelon Hoghton's brigade back to Shidaif or some other suitable point in rear of me on the river, and to place a 15-pounder gun post there, for, he said, if the present situation were prolonged, the enemy's horse might come round my flank and cut the river communication.

I answered, asking if the Viceroy's remark about "present situation" meant Kut-al-Amara or Azizieh. "If it means Kut, then we are too far forward at Azizieh. If the present situation means Azizieh, then I shall first endeavour to destroy the hostile mixed detachment at Zeur by surprise, and then *solidly* retrench Azizieh camp. (It was then only lightly entrenched for precaution's sake.) If the Viceroy means Kut, and I am ordered to withdraw from Azizieh, my first step in retirement will be again to destroy the enemy's detachment of security at Zeur. I shall not echelon Hoghton's brigade down river until I have attacked the hostile detachment at Zeur." (Hoghton's brigade had just joined me.) I ended by hoping that the drafts of recruits were on their way, and by asking what Sir John Nixon's

opinion was on the report of my political officer, Leachman, who stated that the Anizeh and Shammar Arabs, who numbered thousands of fighting men and whose example had great political influence with other Arab tribes, had just entered the contest on the side of the Turks.

In addition to the rough entrenchments at Azizieh I had thrown a pontoon bridge across the Tigris opposite the village, and had entrenched a post south of Azizieh at the bend of the river on the right bank at Frazer's Post, four miles away. It was garrisoned by a battalion, as I considered that the enemy's cavalry might establish some guns there and incommode the shipping.

By 11th October, I had ascertained that the Turkish force at Ctesiphon was of roughly my own numbers, and that Nureddin Pacha was still in command. His force *de couverture* at Zeur—twelve to fourteen miles north of Azizieh—consisted of about 4,000 men. This force had again pushed forward a light detachment of some 1,500 camel corps, 1,000 sabres and 4 guns to El Kutunie, and constant skirmishing took place between my cavalry and the Turks, who were assisted by considerable numbers of Arab horsemen. As such an enterprise would improve the *moral* of my many raw and untrained Indian recruits, who now unfortunately formed the great bulk of the units in the Sixth Division, I had decided to endeavour to surprise and destroy this hostile detachment, by means of a night march. By 27th October,

I considered that they had grown sufficiently confident and careless at El Kutunie, where they were hutted at the edge of a very large wood on the bank of the river, and accordingly I issued operation orders for a march that night against the Turkish post.

Leaving a minimum force of two battalions at Azizieh to ensure the security of the camp, I took a north-westerly course into the desert, and then changed direction to the south when abreast of El Kutunie. It was a clear, starlight night, and the march was carried out under very good conditions. In fact, it was the best I have ever been on as regards march discipline, silence, and absolute obedience to orders. It was also by far the most important as regards numbers I had been with or commanded hitherto, for my division and the cavalry brigade numbered some 12,000 [1] men on this occasion, and I marched in two parallel columns so as to give more rapid deplopment for action.

My experience of night marches on active service up to this one had impressed me with the truth of Napier's saying, that night marches are seldom happy. I took part in the night march on the Nile after the battle of Abu Klea, in Sir Herbert Stewart's desert column of 1,500 men in January,

[1] The reason I took such a large force for this operation against only 1500 cavalry was that I considered that this mounted force might be a bait to draw me on, and that Nureddin might attack me in the midst of my action with his whole force. I was not going to run needless risks.

1885; and I can truthfully say it was the worst conducted march I have ever been on. I was also in a difficult night march in the desert with my battalion, supporting the cavalry of Burn Murdoch before the action at Firket on the Nile, in 1896.

On this march I completely surprised the enemy's camp. I moved forward at first glimpse of light from the position of deployment, straight against the hostile camp at El Kutunie, with the principal mass, using one infantry and one cavalry brigade to turn the enemy's northern flank and menace his line of retreat to the northward. We soon saw lights moving hastily about in the enemy's camp. Sabri Bey, the Turkish commander, was evidently completely surprised. The enemy opened fire with their light camel corps guns, the first shell of which very nearly got me and my G.S.O., I., Colonel Evans. We continued our advance and the enemy fled northward. Had our cavalry charged, the enemy's cavalry and camel corps and guns must have been either destroyed or captured. However, Brigadier-General Roberts, in command of the cavalry brigade, assured me that most unfortunately the terrain on our extreme right was absolutely impossible to charge over, and thus the enemy got away with impunity. Our aeroplanes watched them in their flight through Zeur, and well on the road to Ctesiphon.

After burning the camp at El Kutunie and blowing up the fortified house there, I marched back to Azizieh, annoyed at missing the guns and at the es-

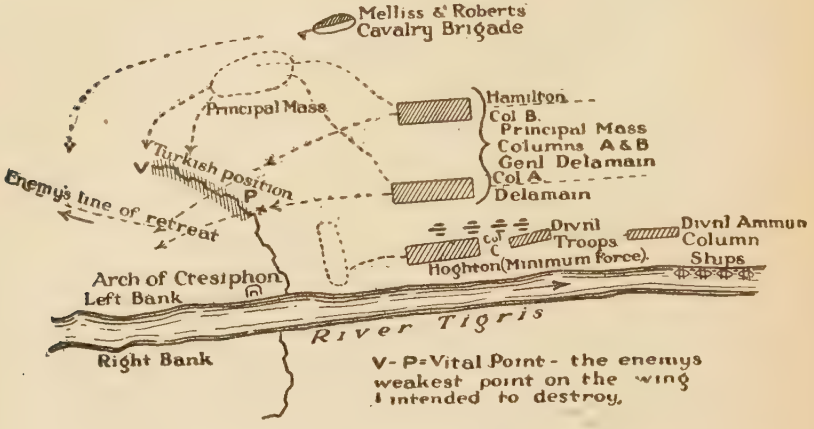
cape of the enemy, but content with the moral effect of the operation on my raw recruits, and on the Arabs on both sides of the Tigris.

A great source of anxiety to me at this time was the safeguarding of the convoys of ships, with barges. The Arabs were actively hostile on both banks up river of Azizieh and brought heavy rifle fire to bear on ships rounding awkward bends and narrow shoal channels in the river. Throughout my operations it will be observed that I had to disseminate troops to hold river defiles, in the same way as in mountain warfare on the North-West Frontier in India one had to disseminate a serious fraction of one's fighting force to safeguard the passage of one's supply convoys through mountain defiles and passes.

Before advancing from Azizieh I had grouped my force for fighting (as well as marching) in the same way as I had previously to the battle of Kut-al-Amara, but into three columns instead of two. The cavalry also formed a flying column, which was to be strengthened by a selected infantry battalion as a support—to be transported in carts, if available—and a pack wireless set was added.

The Principal Mass for the hammer blow would be formed to either wing required by the uniting together of any two of Columns A, B, or C. The third column would form the Minimum Force to curtain that wing of the enemy which was to be held and pinned to its ground, while with the Principal Mass I broke the extreme flank and rear of the opposite

wing. The following sketch shows the manner in which I determined to apply the Principal Mass on the enemy's weakest point at the battle of Ctesiphon.



By predetermined manœuvre the enemy's right wing, resting on the river bank, was to be pinned and held by Column C (Hoghton) with the bulk of the artillery to assist him, while the left flank and rear of the Turks—that nearest their line of retreat—was to be overwhelmed by the Principal Mass, consisting of Columns A and B, under Delamain and Hamilton.

The Turkish position on the right bank was to be ignored, except by the naval flotilla with their guns. In short, the plan of the battle was much the same as that of the Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

The troops detailed to the various columns were:

PRINCIPAL MASS.

COLUMN A. Major-General Delamain, Commanding 16th Inf. Brigade.	16th Inf. Brigade. Half 30th Inf. Brigade. 82nd Battery, R.F.A. Half 22nd Company of Sappers and Miners. 2 British and 3 Indian Sections Field Ambulance.
COLUMN B. Brig.-Gen. Hamilton, Commanding 18th Inf. Brigade.	18th Inf. Brigade. 63rd Battery, R.F.A. Half 22nd Company of Sappers and Miners. 1 British and 3 Indian Sections Field Ambulance.
COLUMN C. Brig.-Gen. Hoghton, Commanding 17th Inf. Brigade.	17th Inf. Brigade. Half 17th Company of Sappers and Miners. 1 British and 2 Indian Sections Field Ambulance.

To manœuvre on exterior flank of Principal Mass.

FLYING COLUMN.[2] Major-General Sir — Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General Roberts), includ-

[2] After the battle was won, the Flying Column under Melliss would follow the beaten enemy into Baghdad, while the naval flotilla did the same work by river.

Charles Melliss,[3] Commanding 30th Inf. Brigade.	ing S battery, R. H. A. 76th Punjabis (Infantry) with 61 carts. Cavalry Brigade Ammunition Column. Maxim battery. 1 Pack Wireless set.

Order of Battle of the Infantry Brigades of the Sixth Division, reinforced by the 30th Brigade (less one battalion).

16th Infantry Brigade. Major-General W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., commanding:—

2nd Battalion Dorset Regiment.
66th Punjabis (replacing the 20th Punjab Infantry).
117th Mahrattas.
104th Rifles.

17th Infantry Brigade. Brig.-General Hoghton commanding:—

1st Battalion Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry.
22nd Punjabis.
103rd Mahrattas.
119th Infantry.

[3] Sir Charles Melliss commanded the 30th Brigade, forming part of General Gorringe's Division, on the line of communications; I had specially asked for him to command this Flying Column. I counted on his well-known energy and distinguished bravery to make it do the work of two, in holding off possible counter-attacks by the Turks in the battle, or, if none were made, to come down like a thunder-bolt on their rear.

18th Infantry Brigade. Brig.-General W. G. Hamilton, C.B., D.S.O., commanding:—

2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment.
110th Mahrattas.
120th Infantry.
7th Rajputs.

30th Brigade (less 1 battalion). Major-General Sir Charles J. Melliss, V.C., K.C.B., commanding:—

76th Punjabis.
24th Punjabis (less ½ battalion left behind at Post of Azizieh on L. of C.).
2/7th Gurkha Rifles.

Cavalry Brigade. Brig.-General Roberts commanding:—

7th Hariana Lancers.
16th Cavalry.
33rd Cavalry (less 1 squadron as 6th Divisional Squadron).
S Battery R.H.A.

Divisional Troops, comprising:—

10th Brigade R.F.A. (less 2 batteries).
1/5th Hants Howitzer battery.
Heavy battery—two 5-inch cow guns.
Divisional Ammunition Column.
1 Squadron 33rd Cavalry (Divisional Cavalry).

Half 17th Company Sappers and Miners.
Search Light Section.
48th Pioneers.
Bridge Train.
1 Wagon Wireless set.
6th Divisional Army Signal Company.

Naval Flotilla, H.M.S.

Firefly (new pattern river gunboat).
Samana (on ald armoured tug-boat).
Comet (an old paddle-wheel river steamer).
Shaitan (tug-boat armoured).

River Transport Steamers:—*Mejidieh, Blosse Lynch, Mosul, Julnar, Salimi.* Hospital clearing ships were the *Blosse Lynch* and *Mosul.*

Moving in three parallel columns on a widely extended front permitted rapid deployment for attack and easy and supple manœuvre, enabling me to envelop a wing of the enemy by merely converging my columns; and in case of an action of encounter it was equally advantageous, for I could hold the enemy with one of the columns and punch him in flank with one or both of the others. Also, in case one column met with solid opposition in its advance, I had only to assist it by the turning manœuvre of one of its neighbouring columns, which could thus mutually assist each other. It will be observed that in this way

I adhered always to the fundamental principles explained in Chapter I.

My orders regarding services, munitions, etc., were issued under the heading of Supplementary Instructions in Part II of operation orders, and included a notification that the advanced depot for supplies was at Kut-al-Amara; that seven days' supplies for the force were magazined at Azizieh; that all combatants were to carry one empty sand-bag apiece; and that the bridge train and engineer stores would be towed by steamer. Orders and instructions I ordered to be marked confidential, and only to be issued to G.O.C.'s brigades and heads of departments, who would notify verbally to O.C.'s units what they found it necessary to tell them. This ensured that packets of typed orders and instructions were not scattered abroad throughout the force, for the enemy's secret agents would certainly have orders to collect all information published in orders, etc.

The M.G.G.S. wired me on 14th October, asking at what date I was prepared to resume the offensive, and what was my general plan of operations. He quoted a telegram from Sir Percy Cox, the chief political officer, who said that information had reached him that, owing to our marking time, certain Arab chiefs were beginning to wobble and treat with the Turks. In sending my plan of operations I ventured to remark that this telegram did not influence strategical and tactical decisions, and that it was a bad day for a commander when he allowed

politics or policy to interfere with strategy—which all history is at hand to prove. In short, I was resolved not to attack the Turks until I had united my whole available force.

I have omitted to mention that Frazer's Post, comprising the 110th Mahrattas, commanded by Colonel Frazer, in a redoubt on the right bank of the river some four miles below Azizieh, was attacked by Arab tribesmen on the night of 10th-11th October. It was a surprise, and the Arabs, cutting the barbed wire, rushed into the work. There was a panic amongst the sepoys, but eventually a handful, under the personal command of Colonel Frazer, drove the Arabs out again. The raiders who penetrated into the redoubt only comprised between thirty and forty men, according to Colonel Frazer's estimate. Nine or ten Indian soldiers were killed and a dozen rifles were lost.

It was not the first time I had known of and experienced panics on the part of troops—and white troops, too—in savage warfare. In this case I went to Frazer's Post and investigated the matter. Two Indian officers were tried by court-martial and broken for cowardice, together with three or four sepoys. The 110th Mahrattas behaved very finely in subsequent operations, and it is well known that panics may occur with the best of troops in night work.

I had received a "snorter" from Sir John Nixon on 15th October, on the subject of my engineers' demand for defence material for the works at Azizieh, his wire to me starting with "What on earth are your en-

gineers doing?" He said that they had already used thirty miles of wire, and were still asking for more, and also more search-lights. Sir John pointed out that he had already commented to me on the elaborate defence of the camp at Kurna prior to my advance. He said that the ideas of the defensive and going to ground were the fungus destroying the spirit of the offensive in the Sixth Division, and that Shaiba and the Gibraltar made of Kurna were examples of this. This was rather hard on the gallant Sixth Division, whose offensive spirit had been proved in two battles already, in a manner, I venture to say, hitherto unsurpassed in the annals of the British army, and was still further to be proved at the battle of Ctesiphon in an inspired ardour which even Cæsar's famous Tenth Legion might have envied.

I replied that there was no question of the defensive with me, but that there was one of the defensive-offensive so long as I remained at Azizieh, close to the enemy. I was only taking ordinary precautions. I said that the wire was being used both at Azizieh and at Frazer's Post; that my entrenched camp consisted only of four small storm-proof redoubts, which economised strong detachments of security in the shape of picquets and supports; and that I should take it as a favour if I were allowed to scrutinise the demands of my services instead of this being done by his staff. I added also that when he read the account of the panic at Frazer's Post he would agree that wire is necessary for security.

On 12th November I sent the *Firefly,* the new river

gunboat, very fast and heavily armed, some twenty miles down river to stretch a hand to a mahela convoy, long and anxiously expected. Of it I see in my diary: "Damn this convoy, which is delaying all my steamers, and has been made to *sail* from Kut for Azizieh against my wishes. Though I see no other way by which the food could come!"

The friendly Arabs had reported on 11th November that Ajil with 200 horsemen had gone down river to intercept it. I told the naval officer in command of the *Firefly* that he must not remain down river longer than midday, 14th November, and that he must come back as soon as Leachman, the political officer, considered it safe to do so. The convoy had 400 Indian soldiers as escort, which ought to have been quite enough for defence against the Arabs if judiciously distributed.

For the advance Chitty and Annesley had arranged seven supply barges, containing:—

[4] 15 days' rations for the British troops of my force.
15 days' rations for the Indian troops of my force.
17 days' fuel.
14 " grain.
14 " fodder.

A large supply of medical comforts and rum.

[4] One day's ration on the men and two in the Supply Column gave a total of 18 days' rations with me for the whole force.

In addition a barge would be left at Azizieh loaded with two extra days' supplies for the men and animals of the whole force.

As regards land transport, I had:—

1,000 mules.
620 camels.
660 carts.
240 donkeys.

I had got land transport for the Sixth Division only. Sir John Nixon had granted my earnest request for the weak 30th Brigade, which belonged to Gorringe's 12th Division, but no land transport was given with it. Nor had the Cavalry Ammunition Column any transport allotted for it, and my staff had to improvise carts and mules for it, as well as for the howitzer ammunition.

I asked Colonel Chitty to take away the 24 carts which, in accordance with Headquarters orders, had to be set aside for salvage purposes, rifles, etc.—for after the battle of Kut-al-Amara Headquarters had been severe on the subject of the insufficient quantity of rifles and arms collected for Government. Now, however, it seemed to me no time to talk of salvage. "I have to win the battle," I said, "before I can think of wasting carts collecting rifles."

By 10th November the sick list of the 6th Division was down to 54 Indian troops of all ranks and 75 British.

On the eve of the advance, my whole force, includ-

ing the two and a half battalions of the 30th Brigade, Naval Flotilla, non-combatants and native followers, amounted to 17,000, of whom just under 14,000 were combatants; of this 14,000 only 8,500 were infantry.

An ever-recurring source of anxiety to me was the safeguarding of the convoys of mahelas on the line of communications between Kut and Azizieh. The Arabs on the right bank of the river had become actively hostile. They harassed the sailing convoys by rifle fire, and in one or two cases I had to arrange against organised raids on my communications by Turkish cavalry and guns in combination with them. A steamer, cautiously feeling its way amongst shallow and tortuous channels in some awkward bend—for there cannot be in the world another such river as the Tigris for serpentine bends—would suddenly come under a heavy rifle fire from the bank at 300 yards' range or less.

Headquarters tried to make me furnish escorts for the convoys working between Kut and Azizieh. Naturally I objected to this dissemination of my already far too weak force. I had to comply, but the principle of taking my troops for safeguarding convoys was utterly opposed to the principle of Economy of Force. These guards should have been supplied by the General of Communications. I mention this incident to show how in every possible way we were undermanned. Headquarters could not make the line of communication troops, and naturally had to come down on my infantry, whom I naturally and properly protected tooth and nail! They had to win

the battle and take Baghdad: no one else was going to obtain our success.

On 11th November, as a preliminary to my advance on Ctesiphon, I pushed forward Brigadier-General Hamilton, with the 18th Infantry Brigade, with one battery attached, as an advanced guard at El Kutunie. The Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Roberts, was included in Hamilton's command. I instructed Hamilton to signal messages to me at Azizieh morning and afternoon as long as he was separated from the main body, so that I should know all was well. I desired him to reconnoitre the road forward to Zeur, and he had to ascertain if the enemy still had guns on the bank at Baghdadie, for it had been from that locality that gun fire was brought to bear on our cavalry on the day we beat the woods at El Kutunie.

I told Hamilton that he must keep a careful look-out on Zeur, but I thought it likely that the enemy's covering force there would retire on his main body at Ctesiphon, as soon as Hamilton installed himself at El Kutunie. For river reconnaissance I also gave Hamilton the *Samana,* which was to be used very cautiously when reconnoitring Baghdadie on the river, for I did not want her holed at this juncture. I recommended that the cavalry should carry out a feeling reconnaissance along the left bank, and endeavour to draw the fire of the concealed guns.

In my note-book I find I had arranged my movements in the advance on Ctesiphon as follows:—

"11th November—Hamilton's mixed brigade and cavalry brigade to be pushed to El Kutunie *en avant garde*. *Samana* to be placed at his disposal.

"15th November—Main body of my force to march to El Kutunie and all ships to come on to that place on that date.

"16th November—The force united to advance on Zeur (a seven miles' march from El Kutunie) and drive the enemy from his entrenchments at that locality. Probably only the advanced guard will be engaged. All ships must be united at Zeur this date. The Divisional Train and Divisional Supply Column not to come on from El Kutunie till Zeur is made good.

"17th November—I shall march the united force to Lajj reach.

"18th November—Reconnaissance of Ctesiphon and possibly demonstration on right bank to deceive enemy.

"19th November—Battle."

The above was the programme laid down, but it

had to be modified, for it was 22nd November before the battle was fought.

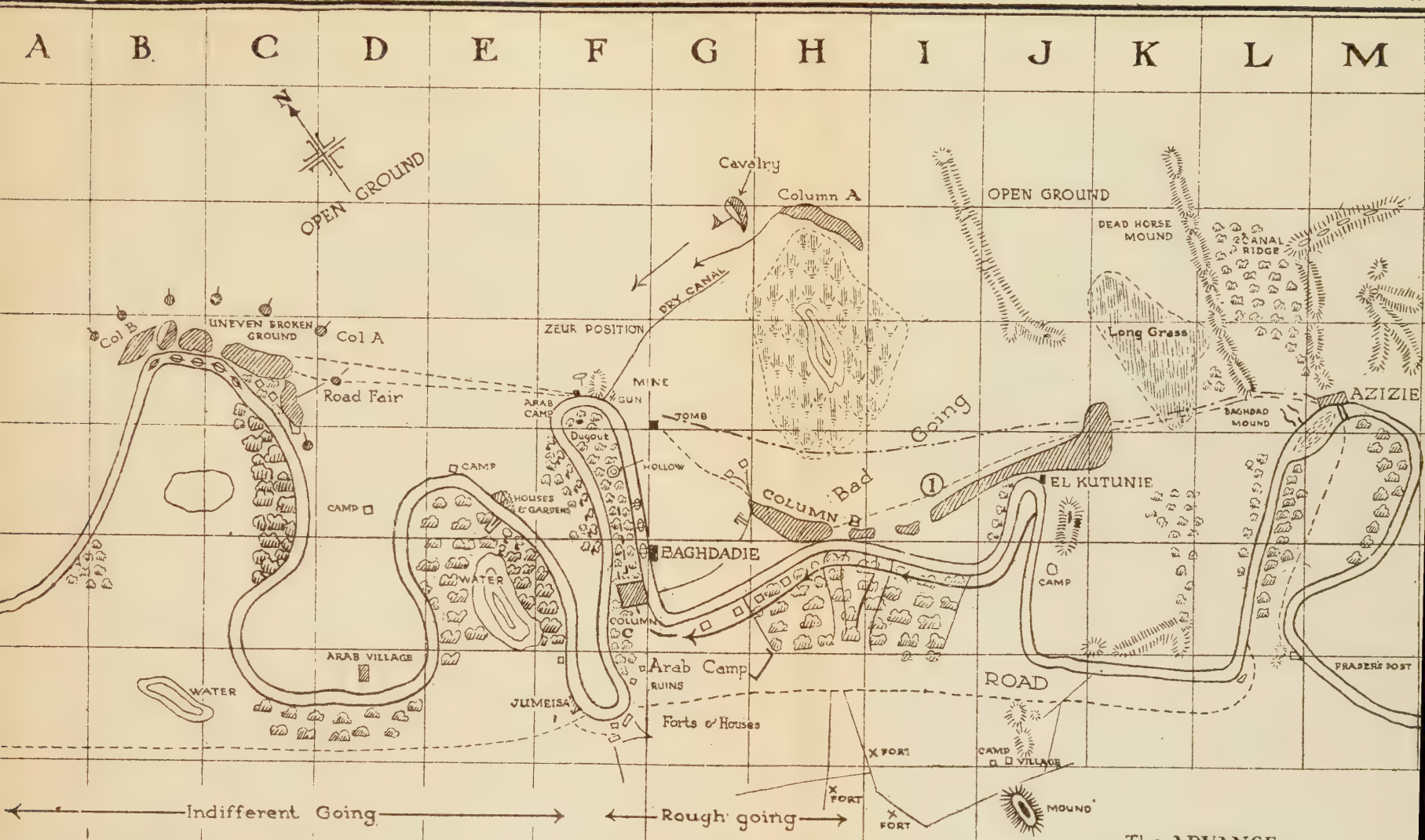
I intended to leave the Supply Column and Divisional Train, including Baggage section, parked at Lajj; and also all the ships under the protection of a rearguard of half an Indian battalion, which was the minimum strength requisite to guard this column. Indeed, they would very probably be attacked by Arab horsemen, and possibly by Turkish cavalry.

On 11th November I ordered the redoubts at Azizieh, which protected the camp, to be filled in, as I had to cut down the defences to the dimensions of a small fortified post in order to suit the garrison I left there, which would be a bed-rock minimum also, to guard the considerable quantity of stores and ammunition I had to leave behind. I ordered Frazer's Post to be demolished and its garrison to rejoin the 17th Brigade. I proceeded the same day up river in the gunboat *Firefly* with the S. N. O. and shelled Baghdadie. We came under rifle fire from the banks, but, as no guns opened on us, I concluded rightly that the Turks had withdrawn the guns from Baghdadie.

On my return in the evening, I fixed the garrison to be left at Azizieh—half a battalion of the 24th Punjabis (30th Brigade). The other half of this battalion I intended to use for guarding the ships, supply column, and Divisional Train during the battle of Ctesiphon. I also left at Azizieh a hundred convalescents able to handle a rifle but not to march, two four-inch guns for which I had no means of

transport, and a 15-pounder field gun. The garrison was to be commanded by Major Farmer, R.G.A.

Sir John Nixon, accompanied by his Staff and by Sir Percy Cox, the Political Officer, arrived at Azizieh in the *Malamir,* on 13th November. He decorated Major Utterson of the Dorset Regiment with the D.S.O., at a parade held for that purpose. Utterson had shown conspicuous gallantry throughout the campaign, and was again to distinguish himself at Ctesiphon.



@ *Actual length of the Divisional Train including Supply Column, remaining packed at El Kutunie, until the enemy left Zeur.*

The ADVANCE on CTESIPHON.

ROADS ----------

THICK SCRUB

THIN SCRUB

ENTRENCHMENTS

TELEGRAPH —·—·—·—·—

CHAPTER IX

THE ADVANCE ON CTESIPHON

I SUBMITTED my plan or project of operations for the advance on Baghdad to Sir John Nixon, on 8th November. It was as follows:—

The Principal Objective.

(1) In moving forward for the next stage my principal objective is to seek the bulk of the hostile force in the field and to destroy it, then to occupy Baghdad.

(2) To this end, the decisive victory having been gained, it must be put to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit, followed by a march on Baghdad and its occupation. Such was my intention in the Kut-al-Amara operations, but a combination of circumstances rendered that victory indecisive as far as Baghdad is concerned. Had the offensive wing of manœuvre progressed in the battle as I had planned, the Amarah to Baghdad phase of the campaign would have probably ended in an unopposed entry into Baghdad.[1]

(3) (*a*) The bulk of the enemy's forces is on the left bank of the Tigris, some four miles above (north

[1] But how long we should have remained there before being thrown out again is another question. We could never have stayed there for any length of time with anything under an Army Corps.

of) Ctesiphon, near the bridge of boats, handy for transfer to either bank, i.e., his Principal Mass—4,000 Infantry (estimated).

(*b*) A *force de couverture* estimated at 2,500 Infantry, 700 Cavalry and 400 Camel Corps, is entrenched at Zeur on the left bank.

(*c*) On the right bank, holding a mile of entrenchments at Seleucia (including one strong redoubt) is a detachment of 1,500 Infantry and 500 Cavalry.

(*d*) The lines of Ctesiphon on the right bank are occupied by an estimated 1,500 Infantry and 500 Cavalry.

The total of the enemy's forces in the field is variously estimated at 10,900 combatants and 30 guns, and at 12,000 to 13,000 combatants and 40 guns.

(4) Therefore it is indicated that I should advance from Azizieh by the left bank, the Baghdad road being the shortest and most advisable to gain the desired goal, which is to defeat the bulk of the hostile forces in the field and to occupy Baghdad. My directing idea is to get Nureddin to fight me in the open if possible, as a continuous campaign of attacking entrenchments lessens the men's keenness for battle.

(5) In consequence of the above principles and ideas I intend to unite all my forces in my hand and to move forward *united* to attack the enemy's covering force at Zeur, which, according to tactical principles, should retire on the main body at Ctesiphon as soon as I advance to El Kutunie from here.

If, on the contrary, it stands to fight in the Zeur

entrenchments, so much the better for me. It will enable me to take advantage of a tactical error—dissemination of force—and destroy this detached force in consequence.

Zeur is distant from Ctesiphon some 16 miles (and even 19 from where the main body of the Ctesiphon troops is stationed), and El Kutunie is only seven miles from Zeur. So the main force at its station north of Ctesiphon will hardly be able to unite itself with the force at Zeur in time to prevent me from destroying it.

I should march straight against the force at Zeur, drawing in my turning attack like a net on to their left flank and rear.

(6) (*A*) If, on the other hand, the enemy falls back on Ctesiphon, I shall follow as rapidly as possible (endeavouring with my Cavalry Brigade to cut off this rearguard) and attack him in his position at Ctesiphon on the left bank of the river, by the same tactics, of the turning move with the Principal Mass against the enemy's left flank and rear, as I used at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara; whilst with a minimum force I contain that part of his position which lies north of the Baghdad Road (some 3¾ miles only of entrenchments and redoubts). My Cavalry Brigade, working on the exterior flank of the turning attack and moving in a wide circle, will attack the enemy's left rear.

(*B*) Or, in order to avoid the enemy's invitation to attack him in his entrenched position at Ctesiphon, and so make him cross after me to the other bank

and thus draw him into open ground, where he will have no entrenchments, and so be far less formidable, I should throw my bridge of boats across the Tigris at Saisbannah, some five miles west of Zeur, in the night, cross to the right bank, and move on Baghdad.

This would, I think, compel Nureddin to cross the river by his bridge of boats above Ctesiphon and march some five miles in order to occupy the trenches on the right bank (only one mile of trenches) which can easily be turned by me. The great bulk of his force would then be compelled to fight in the open, and the remedy again to be applied would be the turning move with my Principal Mass against his rear and right (west) flank, the cavalry and horse artillery moving in a wide sweep to the westward to occupy mounds (twenty feet high), three miles north of the enemy's position, close to and commanding the bridge of boats; attacking the mounds if held by the enemy.

(7) I prefer "B" plan, as it should be very decisive if Nureddin gives battle in this way; and the necessity of having to force the unformidable Diala River would be obviated. I have my bridge of boats with me, and can cross wherever I wish to enter Baghdad.

There is an existing bridge of boats at Qararah, and the boat-bridge at the mouth of the Diala is not removed yet, I think. Other reasons for not attacking the Ctesiphon position on the left bank are: firstly, because the enemy invites me to do so; and, secondly, the Shrine of Salman Pak is there, a most

sacred place to Mohammedans, and the Mohammedans among our Indian troops are already talking amongst themselves of the sacrilege of firing on such a holy place as Salman Pak.

(8) Should Nureddin, on my adopting "B" plan, retire into Baghdad and call on the inhabitants to defend the Holy City—which I do not think probable, for once in the city his Arab battalions would largely disband themselves—I should take up a position south-east of the city and act according to circumstances. I should bombard or assault after giving the inhabitants time to think of the consequences; or I should make use of secret-service money among the civilians to compel the Turkish force to retire without fighting and so spare the city from the horror of an assault.

If I have to attack the city on the left bank of the Tigris, the frontal attack will be along the left bank of the river connected with my ships and gunboats, the offensive wing of manœuvre (Principal Mass) turning the city by the eastward and forcing an entrance by roads entering Baghdad at its north and north-east fronts.

(9) The enemy has practically no transport but his steamers and barges.

(10) What is the enemy likely to do?

I think it is probable that he will continue his strategy of the pure defensive, since he has not the mobility nor the power of manœuvring necessary for him to change the defensive into the offensive.

Since I advanced to attack Kurna the Turkish

generals have been on the passive defensive throughout. For the last century or more of their history they have followed this course; from the time of the defence of Acre against Bonaparte up to the defence of Plevna and that of the famous lines of Tchataldtcha covering Constantinople. The Turk fights well only when behind defences, and he has been mediocre, to say the least of it, in the open. His strategy in Mesopotamia after Shaiba has been to retire from defensive position to defensive position into the interior of the country, so as to gain time, during which those factors which constantly tend to weaken the tide of the offensive—in Europe, want of reinforcements, munitions, etc.; in the East, heat, disease, etc.—may operate on the attacker. He has been slowly withdrawing, but approaching meanwhile his source of supply, Baghdad. In strategy the action of the Turks is absolutely in accordance with the fundamental principles of the art of war. Economy of Force demands that they should unite every soul to fight in their Principal Theatre wherein the real decision is being fought out, i.e., the Gallipoli Peninsula, while their secondary or defensive fields of action, such as Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, should only be held on the defensive by minimum forces.

Therefore I do not expect the Turks to take the offensive against us in Mesopotamia until they are successful in the Gallipoli Peninsula, in which case the offensive in overwhelming numbers will be taken at once in Mesopotamia.

(11) I hope the Army Commander will make every effort to bring in all men detached from my division at Basra and so forth, and to urge the authorities in India to send at least another division, and that quickly. So long as more troops come into the country even the Arabs will remain tranquil and we shall retain our confidence. As it is now the British soldier and the Sepoy look over their shoulders, uneasy at the great distance from the sea.

The grand total of my troops in Azizieh, to date, is 9,183 combatants, and in addition 365 weak men, unable to march for a few days but able to use a rifle and hold a post.

P.S.—Since writing the above general project of operations I have received such bad reports as to the difficulties of terrain on the right bank in the neighbourhood of the south end of the old loop of the river—eight miles south of Ctesiphon as the crow flies—in the shape of deeply cut and accidented ground, water cuts of great size, and thick scrub, as to turn my thoughts more to the left bank, on which after all lies the shortest and best road to my desired goal, which is to destroy the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field. Another argument in favour of using the left bank as my avenue of approach to Baghdad, at any rate as far as the battle of Ctesiphon is concerned, is that the hostile force is in front of me there, with an impassable river on his flank and the equally impassable River Diala in his rear, and with only one

or two flimsy bridges to cross either. In such a case the enemy's defeat may well mean his utter destruction.

Telegram from M.G.G.S., dated 7th November, 1915:—

"Army Commander quite approves your general idea and thinks it is sound to defer your final decision as you propose."

On first getting my project of operations, Sir John Nixon said he preferred that I should operate on the right bank from Zeur onwards, i.e., my Project B, but I declined to alter my project unless I saw good reason to do so when I reached Zeur, as the principle of seeking the bulk of the hostile forces in the field should not be departed from. I had the direction and conduct of these operations and therefore I took all risks. I said that I must follow my own judgment.

On 15th November, having united my Division at Azizieh, I marched it to El Kutunie, a distance of seven miles, where I joined up the advance guard sent out on 11th November, and all ships were brought in.

The Turkish force at Ctesiphon was estimated by our Intelligence Department and aerial reconnaissance at roughly 11,000 combatants and 36 guns; but it will be seen this was not nearly the enemy's real

strength, which undoubtedly amounted to over 15,000[2] men and anything between 40 and 50 guns. The intelligence was in the hands of Colonel Beach, Army Headquarters, who imparted information to me as he got it. Just before advancing from Azizieh, I questioned him on the many local Arab reports we heard of large Turkish reinforcements arriving at Ctesiphon. He replied, "We have heard these reports, but have no official confirmation of them." Large reinforcements, it is now known, came from Mosul and elsewhere and joined Nureddin's army at Ctesiphon, some before, and Khalil's Army Corps during, the battle; so that the native reports and rumours proved true in the end. Beach also told me that Sir John Nixon had received a telegram from the War Office, London, saying that they had very reliable information that an expedition was on its way from Turkey to Baghdad. This is said in no carping spirit at the work of the Intelligence branch in Mesopotamia, and in particular at that of Colonel Beach, for whose energy and ability I have the highest regard. To sift the truth from many reports was not an easy task. But I wish to establish facts as I found them and with which I had to deal, and to show that we should never have taken the offensive in a secondary theatre without large reinforcements.

[2] In his despatch, Sir John Nixon estimated "the Turks at 13,000 *regular* troops and 38 guns, and there were reports of further arrivals of reinforcements." In my despatch of the battle I said that there were nearer 20,000 Turks and between 40 and 50 guns.

As a German officer at Constantinople said to me: "Instead of 9,000 infantry you should have had 90,000!" Who will now say he was wrong, when the strength of the force given to General Maude to make the second advance on Baghdad is compared with mine?

Since my return from captivity I read in the Mesopotamia enquiry report "that General Townshend (referring to my warning) did not press his objections, and when he advanced on November 21st, to attack the two strong lines of the Turkish entrenchments at Ctesiphon, a spirit of intense optimism animated the Headquarters and Administrative Staff."

I know nothing about this "intense optimism." All I do know is that I was determined to carry the operation through if it could possibly be done, and it was my plain and simple duty to carry out the orders of my superior to the best of my ability, although his orders were against my better judgment. Personally I had no doubts in my mind as to the extreme gravity of the results of this advance—an offensive undertaken with insufficient forces, and not only that, but an offensive undertaken in a secondary theatre of the war, where our strategy should have been to have remained on the defensive with minimum forces sufficient for that purpose. All my study indicated disaster to me.

However, the die was cast; my superior had judged otherwise. Therefore I made up my mind to carry through the operation with confidence and cheeriness

and a joke for everyone in the bivouacs, as is my custom. A certain amount of optimism is absolutely necessary in all operations of war, and especially on the part of the General Staff, in order to induce feelings of confidence and security among the troops. Imagine the effect of a Staff Officer, with an order to advance, galloping up to a column with a face of excitement and consternation! The troops would at once conclude that there was something wrong. And so, when Sir John Nixon asked me on the eve of the battle, "Are you confident of winning, Townshend?" I replied, "Yes, I shall win all right." And I did win.

On inspection of Hamilton's measures of security at El Kutunie, I pushed out a mixed detachment, some 4,000 to 5,000 yards along the road to Zeur, and also placed two strong picquets of 50 rifles each on the right bank of the river opposite our camp to protect it from insult, supporting them with the guns of the *Firefly* and *Samana.*

On the evening of 16th November, there were still no signs of the steamers *Shihab, Shurur* or *Shirin,* which were behind time. It was exasperating. To complete my troubles, I found that the *Salimi,* which carried our coal and oil and on which the ships entirely depended, had been sent back to look for the missing steamers!

I could not wait any longer. I decided to send the *Samana* gunboat to tow up the two barges with our two four-inch guns on board. C Column was to march from Azizieh to El Kutunie and all ships

were to come on from there, including the bridge train, the steam launches for which had arrived.

The missing ships luckily arrived on the afternoon of 18th November, and I immediately gave orders for an advance on Zeur the next day. Although I expected the covering force there to fall back slowly on to the Turkish main body as I advanced, still there is no knowing what a Turkish commander may or may not do, when he is unaccompanied by German staff officers. So my dispositions were for possible battle. I decided to march a detachment by the right bank, as I must deal with the fortified Arab villages of Jumeisa and Baghdadie on that bank. They were strongly held by the Arabs of Sheikh Ajil, and practically barred the passage of my ships at a dangerous loop and shallow channel in the river. Moreover, 500 Turkish cavalry with two field guns were reported to be with the Arabs in this locality. Thus, much to my annoyance, I was forced to put a detachment on the other side of an impassable river; and this detachment had to be strong enough to run no risk of suffering a check or being held up. A brigade was indicated, which should also co-operate with me in the attack on Zeur, as it would be fairly easy to bring enfilade fire on the Zeur entrenchments from the top of the bend on the right bank as soon as Jumeisa and Baghdadie had been taken by the collar.[3]

[3] I also hoped to turn the march of the detachment along the right bank into an advantage, by inducing Nureddin at Ctesiphon to transfer more troops from the left bank to the right. But, as I had succeeded in this trick at Kut-al-Amara, I did not expect it to meet with a similar measure of success.

The detachment would have to rejoin me at Zeur by means of my boat-bridge, which I should throw over for it. Fire from the gunboats must supply the place of artillery.

I should myself, with the Principal Mass of my force, advance against the Zeur entrenchments in two parallel columns, on a widely extended front. With the left column (that moving along the left bank of the Tigris) I should make a containing attack on the Zeur entrenchments in front, whilst with the right column (the offensive wing of manœuvre) I should turn the northern flank and rear of the entrenchments and so roll up the enemy's defence.

A preliminary order was issued on the arrival of the missing ships, warning the division, the Naval Flotilla, and the ship convoy, to be in readiness to advance the next morning, and my complete operation orders for the advance on Zeur were issued at 4:30 p. m. on 18th November, 1915.

At 6 p. m. I received an air reconnaissance to the effect that 4,000 or 5,000 of the enemy were on the march by the left bank from Ctesiphon to Zeur—evidently to reinforce the covering force entrenched in that locality—and also that 5,000 or 6,000 Turks were in motion towards us from Ctesiphon by the right bank, 3,000 of whom were only three or four miles away. This report was corroborated by another aerial reconnaissance conducted by Major Reilly, in whom I had implicit confidence. I had disbelieved the first report on the grounds of its im-

probability. However, on Reilly's corroboration, I determined at once to entrench the minimum force, represented by Column "C," on the right bank at El Kutunie to cover the ships. Meanwhile I marched at daylight with the principal mass ("A" and "B" columns and the Cavalry Brigade) to attack the enemy at Zeur; or on meeting them to fight an encounter battle, for, since the enemy had divided his forces by an impassable river, my tactics were clear —to hold him on the right bank with my minimum force, while with my maximum force I destroyed him on the left.

In the early morning I advanced on Zeur with two columns, about 5,000 yards apart, the cavalry working on the exterior flank of the exterior column. The enemy evacuated the place after a slight skirmish between the cavalry of both sides.

I have reason to believe that the reported offensive movements of large bodies from Ctesiphon on both flanks were merely feints or demonstrations to make me lose time, and if so they succeeded.[4] Aeroplane observers can easily be deceived by a body of the enemy, who, on sighting the aeroplane, move at once in a contrary direction to that of the real march, and turn back as soon as the machine has gone to give the news.

I wired for Column "C" and the ships to come on to Zeur. It was not till 9 p. m. that they arrived, but the bridge was thrown across during the night,

[4] Nureddin was anxiously awaiting the arrival of Khalil's army corps.

and "C" Column joined me at daylight. At 9 a. m. on 20th November, I marched to Lajj reach, whence I intended to deliver battle against the Turks at Ctesiphon.

While at Zeur I had decided that I would not cross to the right bank, as the shortest and most judicious road to my desired goal lay on the left bank, and I should compel him to fight with the impassable Tigris on one flank and the equally impassable Diala in his rear. He had, of course, one or two boat-bridges available, but these would not avail him in a disorderly retreat.

I now prepared for battle, issuing my general instructions, which I gave out in a lecture to all General officers commanding brigades, with as many field officers as could be spared also present, so that all should work heart and soul with me, and in *one doctrine* in the battle. It will be seen that my battle manœuvre was the same as in the Battle of Kut-al-Amara. I sought victory by throwing my Principal Mass on what I judged to be the enemy's weakest point—namely, his left flank.

General Instructions as regards the rôle *to be played by the three attacks:—*

Preparatory Attack:

Minimum Force	17th Brigade.
Turning Attack	18th Brigade and Mounted Troops.

Decisive Attack:

Principal Mass	16th Brigade and Mounted Troops and 30th Brigade (less 1 Battalion).

In the coming battle, whether it is fought on the right or left bank, the manœuvre I shall use is the one I used at the battle of Kut-al-Amara, i.e., the manœuvre against the enemy's flank and rear. See Section 102, para. 3, Field Service Regulations, Part I, 1909 (Reprint 1914). As there are some officers who have not the book in their possession, I will quote the reference: "Broadly speaking, success in battle may be sought by means of a converging movement of separated forces to strike the enemy's front and flank, few, if any, reserves being retained in hand by the General-in-Chief.

"A decisive attack against some portion of the enemy's front offers a possibility of breaking his army in two and may give great and far-reaching results. The long range, accuracy and rapidity of fire of modern weapons, however, reduce the chances of success of such an attack (the manœuvre against the enemy's centre), while failure may result in the attacking force being enveloped and destroyed. It will usually therefore be wiser to direct the decisive effort against one of the enemy's flanks, the choice of the objective being made either before or after deployment, according to circumstances. The development of fire effect is usually facilitated when the plan of

battle has for its object the envelopment of one, or if in very superior strength, of *both* the enemy's flanks."

At Kut-al-Amara I divided my force into two portions—a minimum force, Column "B," and a Principal Mass or maximum force, Column "A." Whilst I held on to the enemy with Column "B" I gave the round-arm swing and punch with Column "A." The Cavalry co-operated with the attack of the offensive wing of manœuvre working on its exterior flank, which is the accepted position of the bulk of the cavalry in battle in the French and German armies. It will be observed that in the coming battle I have added another portion, or, rather, divided my force into three portions:

The Minimum Force or Preparatory Attack;

The Turning Attack, with which the mounted troops co-operate;

The Principal Mass or Decisive Attack.

The reason for this is that the enemy will expect me now to repeat the distribution of troops in deployment as was made at Kut-al-Amara, and will endeavour to meet the turning attack with his reserve of 3,000 or 4,000 men, placed back as far as Qusabah. I hope to surprise him at a time when the turning attack is hotly engaged, with the powerful blow of the Principal Mass delivered on the spot marked "V.P." on the map. That is the vital point.

If, during the attack of the Principal Mass, the enemy counter-attacks any other portion of my force, all the threatened troops have to do is to hold on and

the vigour of the Decisive Attack will be increased. The success of the Principal Mass at the Vital Point means ultimate success at all points.

In addition, I trust to Column "C" (mounted troops) to paralyse all action of the enemy's general reserve by attacking him in rear.

Though the three attacks (in reality four, counting the attack of the mounted troops as being distinct from the 18th Brigade's turning attack) appear to be separated, they are not so in reality, for I shall place them at distances apart, not beyond effective field artillery range, i.e., a distance of from 4,000 to 2,500 yards.

Rôle of Preparatory Attack:

If I attack on the left bank, in all probability the Preparatory Attack (or Minimum Force) under General Hoghton will move frontally against the enemy, on a front of, say, 1,000 yards, with his right resting on the telegraph line.

The Divisional Artillery (Land Section) will be with the Preparatory Attack so as to aid it with powerful artillery. Thus General Hoghton's *rôle* will be to attack that wing of the enemy which is furthest from his line of retreat. His *rôle* is characterised by a defensive attitude and is analogous with our "Secondary or Defensive Field" in strategy. Aided by the spade and entrenching tool and the Divisional Artillery he will work his way forward to within long range from the enemy, if possible. Not only is his *rôle* to hold the enemy by the collar in his position, but, by making a great display

and fight, he should induce him to use up his reserves. He will utilise all natural and artificial obstacles in the way of dry canals, watercuts, and the accidents of the ground. He will not make his attack a decisive one until it is seen that the Principal Mass is moving forward to the attack. This will be the signal for every able-bodied man in the force to move resolutely towards the enemy. The *rôle* of the Minimum Force can well be called a combat of immobilisation and usury.

Rôle of the Turning Attack:

After the battle has been well commenced by the Minimum Force, the Turning Attack—18th Brigade and Divisional Cavalry (one squadron), under Brigadier-General Hamilton, will attack the enemy's left flank and rear, which is a direct menace to his natural line of retreat. This attack must be pushed with vigour and resolution; nothing must stop it.

Column "C" mounted troops, comprising the Cavalry Brigade, "S" Battery R.H.A., and 48th Pioneers, under Major-General Sir Charles Melliss, will co-operate by working on the exterior flank (north of the 18th Brigade), in a wide sweep of some eighteen miles, so as to attack the enemy in rear with its H.A. guns in the neighbourhood of Qusabah and take his second line of trenches in enfilade, thus seriously menacing his line of retreat. Its attack should be vigorously pushed, and the sound of its guns alone will cause the Turkish forces to the south at once to look over their shoulders with a feeling of fear. Column "C" mounted troops will be in communica-

tion with Divisional Headquarters, which will be near the Divisional Artillery with the Preparatory Attack.

Rôle of the Principal Mass or Decisive Attack:

On principle I shall order the Principal Mass forward as soon as the enemy seriously feels the Turning Attack. This attack will be launched straight forward against the spot marked "V.P." on the map. The advance of the Principal Mass will be the signal for the whole force to move forward against the enemy; and every effort will be made by the Divisional Artillery Commander to bring a converging fire on "V.P." Even the guns of the Turning Attack will direct their fire if possible on "V.P." so that a clear avenue of approach may be swept for the Principal Mass under General Delamain.

To sum up the system of this attack:—

(*a*) I make a frontal containing attack with the Minimum Force in order to take the wing of the enemy in front of it by the collar and pin it to the ground.

(*b*) When the Minimum Force is well engaged, the Turning Attack is launched against that flank of the enemy which lies nearest his natural line of retreat.

(*c*) When the Turning Attack is taking effect, the Principal Mass or hammer blow will be launched against the same wing as that shaken by the Turning Attack.

Such dispositions carry out the two greatest of the fundamental principles of war:

(*a*) Economy of Force, i.e., the judicious grouping of your forces for gaining victory. In other words you concentrate your Principal Mass or Maximum Force in your principal field of operations and your Minimum Force in your secondary (or defensive) field for secondary operations.

(*b*) The Principle of the Mass, which may be said to be part and parcel of that of Economy of Force. It consists in operating with the greatest mass of your troops on the decisive point, i.e., the enemy's weakest or vital point, which on principle must be on that flank which lies nearest his natural line of retreat.

These great principles won Napoleon and his greatest pupil Moltke all their victories. They form part of the doctrine of the great Continental armies of to-day; and the so-called French and German theories are nothing more or less than the application of Napoleon's two greatest principles. Napoleon preferred the bold, wide, sweeping turning movement or attack because its action is so decisive; Moltke, much more cautious, preferred the enveloping movement or attack, as it is less risky. But it gives far less decisive results than the turning attack, and, as Napoleon observed, "He who fears risks had better not play cards." As a matter of fact my dispositions for this attack, by converging, will become finally an envelopment only, as at Kut-al-Amara.

The German General Staff declare that there is no difference at all between their system and that of Napoleon. The centre, they say, is practically impenetrable in these days, and the flanks must be turned or

enveloped in order to obtain a decisive and annihilating result. "Bind or fix the enemy in front whilst you turn and crush one of his wings." The strength of the attack lies in its convergent nature, consequently envelopment is the most advantageous form of attack.

"The enveloping troops have to face the danger which threatens their outer flank, and they should therefore be followed by reserves" (Von der Goltz).

In this case the mounted troops will, I think, apply the remedy to the enemy's counter-attack, and the enemy has not the manœuvring power or the will to leave his entrenchments and counter-attack the Turning Movement.

Of course, if I had had the two divisions I asked for, which would have made me superior in numbers to the enemy, entrenched in his position—and the attack always supposes great superiority over the enemy as regards numbers—I could have made a frontal attack with half a division, while with the other division and a half I could have enveloped his flank and rear and made victory certain.

But I had to attack an enemy at least as strong as myself, on the defensive and in a very strong position, and so I hoped to make up for my want of numbers by exploiting the principle of Economy of Force. I hoped to paralyse a great part of the forces of the enemy, entrenched along a large extent of front, by the use of an inferior fraction of my troops,

acting as a minimum force, disguising its weakness by boldness of action and ruse, whilst I hit the hammer blow on the enemy's flank and rear with my Principal Mass. This was to be a decisive blow which would bring victory. Von der Goltz, in "The Nation Armed," describes this use of the principle of Economy of Force. "A skilful general will often know how to paralyse the forces of the enemy by an inferior fraction of his own troops, disguising its weakness by audacity, or in forcing it to undertake an enterprise which will cost heavily. Then he will be able to bring numerical superiority at the place where he will strike the decisive blow, where alone it is profitable. It is a question of economic talent—and we call it a wise economy of forces, which constitutes a condition of success."

I hoped, by means of a turning manœuvre with the Principal Mass of my force, either to throw the Turks into the Tigris or to compel them to a disastrous flight across the Diala River, some six miles behind them. That river was impassable, and they only had one bridge of boats over it. It will be seen that I very nearly succeeded. For success I must trust largely to the bomb and bayonet. I had no illusions as to the extreme gravity of my task, and I knew that in the above plan lay my only chance of success. He who trusts to driving the enemy from his position solely by superiority of fire effect will be rudely disappointed. The assault must be made through a tempest of shell and bullets; a resolute and steady ad-

vance must be continued. I believed that the Turk, when he realised he could not stop us, would not wait for the clubbed rifle, the bayonet, and the grenade.

Instructions in case we had street fighting in Baghdad.[5]

Street fighting must be considered under two headings:—

(1) Fighting in streets, villages and houses. To turn out troops defending these localities.
(2) Quelling an insurrection in a city, or fighting civil inhabitants defending their houses, as at Saragossa in Spain.

Firstly, it must be understood that whether you are fighting in streets, or villages, or forcing the passage of a river or chain of mountains, or fighting in mountains, woods, etc., the fundamental principles of war hold good. Formerly, military writers innumerable laid down different tactics and manœuvres for attacking or defending localities. This was all wrong; the great principles of holding with the minimum and hitting with the maximum, of Economy of Force, and of bringing the Mass to bear against the enemy's weakest point (which must be one of his flanks or his centre) always hold good, by land or sea.

In street fighting, then, in order to drive out troops

[5] I did not think that we should have any street fighting in Baghdad; but it is necessary to foresee everything. I knew that in history the Turks have given several worthy examples of the defence of towns. Perhaps the most remarkable was the case of Rosetta, or Damietta, where our troops, from want of instructions, suffered a severe disaster.

defending themselves in a city, the task must be divided up into sectors, one of which is the secondary field, in which the minimum force carries out a holding or containing attack, combining a slow advance with an attack of immobilisation and usury. The principal or offensive field is allotted to the Principal Mass on the offensive, the *rôle* of which is to carry out a turning or enveloping manœuvre by fighting its way along roads and streets leading in the desired direction.

The column or columns will have to fight their way along defended streets with barricades and strongly defended houses on the opposite sides of the road. (A few strokes with a pick and you have a hole in the partition of houses.) Or they can work along flat roofs. Garrisons of barricades, strong houses, etc., will always clear when they find their retreat menaced. *Always leave a bolt hole.* Otherwise a few desperate men in a house can keep you at bay a long time. If you have not cut off a defended house open up a parley. Offer any terms to get possession of the house without having to fight for it.

In order to approach an isolated defended building, such as a barracks or tower, hall or church in an open square, use a cart or two laden with sacks, wood, stones, etc., and push it in front of you. Thus you can go up to the main entrance with impunity and blow in the doors.[6]

When moving along a street under fire from the

[6] The Tank is taken from this idea of approaching buildings by the use of such a moving shield as above.

houses, move your men in two ranks, one on each side of the street, as close to the houses as the men can get. The men of each single rank must fire up at the windows and loopholes of the opposite side of the street, and the defenders will be in a worse position than their adversaries in the street.

Parallel columns should communicate if possible, by cross alleys or streets, or by passages cut through houses.

Always follow up each column by a stream of reinforcements or the head of a column will grow anxious at no signs of troops or supports coming up behind, and will become uneasy and hesitating.

Always have sappers at the head of your columns with plenty of axes and crowbars. A rifle fired into the lock of a door will destroy it. Crowbars are essential for knocking a hole from one house to another.

When street fighting is considered under the heading of (2) above, i.e., when dealing with a revolt or insurrection, one should act on the same principles. One should endeavour to isolate the quarter of the city to be attacked, to divide it up into sectors, and to deal with one sector at a time.

Always turn a defended locality or house. Never attack it frontally.

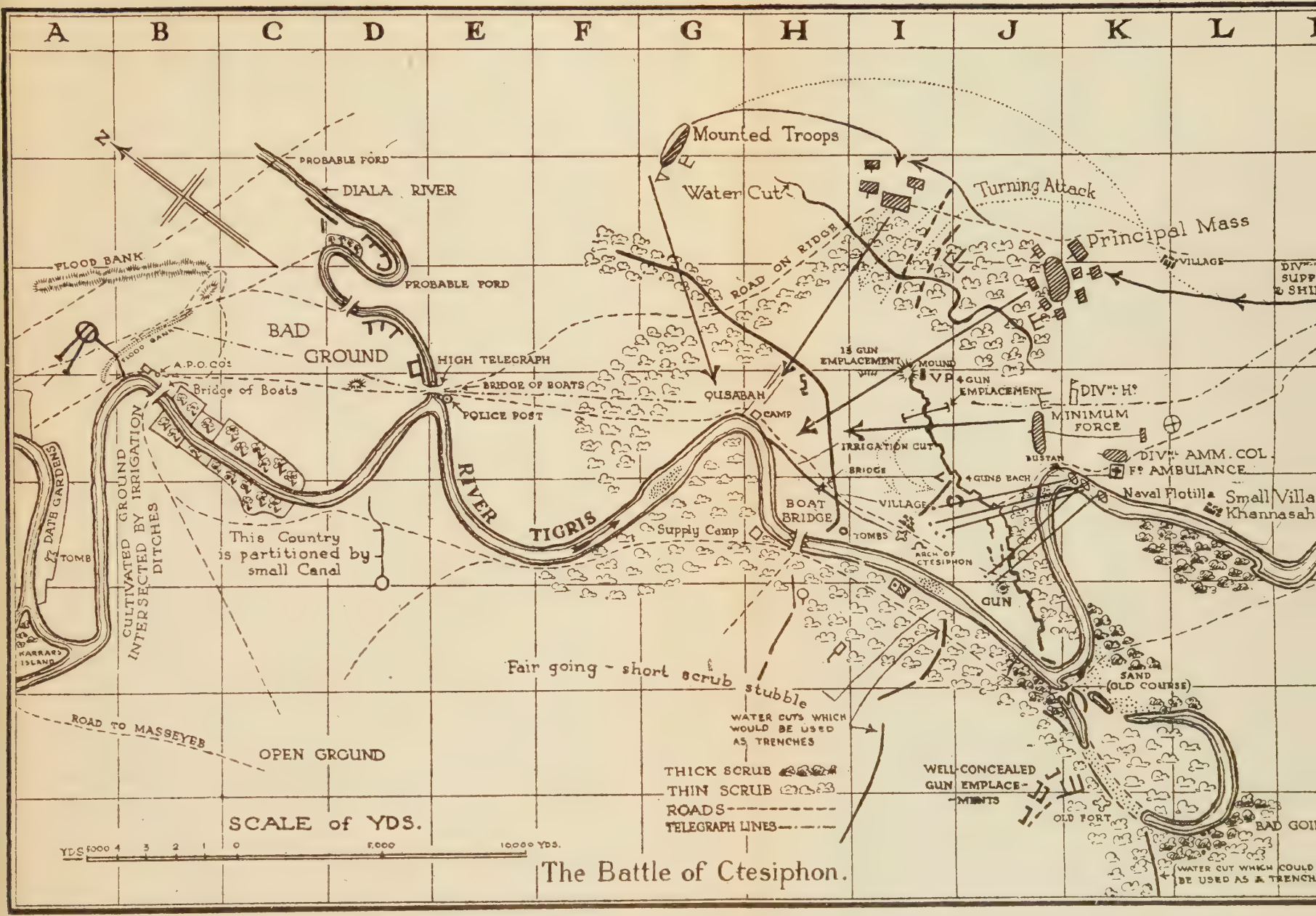
To hold a city against a rising of the inhabitants one should hold each avenue of approach with a minimum force and keep a Central or Principal Mass in some central position ready to reinforce any of the minimum forces as may be desirable.

I had halted and bivouacked my force at Lajj, only a very short day's march from the Turkish position. We could see the famous arch of Ctesiphon in the distance. Reconnaissances were carried out to fix the *rendezvous* of the different attacks—The Cavalry Column and Turning Attack; the Principal Mass; and the frontal or containing attack by the Minimum Force—the Cavalry Brigade ensuring the security of the reconnaissances. It was ascertained that a track marked in the map, apparently leading from Lajj northward round the enemy's position, really existed, and formed an excellent guide for the various columns when marching to get into position. In short, we made all preparations for battle.

Air reconnaissances also were carried out against the enemy's position at Ctesiphon. These showed us alterations in the defences and the grouping of his force. Major Reilly, the brilliant aviator, who had been of the utmost assistance to me in the campaign by his daring reconnaissances and his excellent eye-sketches of the enemy's positions, was lost on this afternoon. He proposed that he should cut the telegraph wires in several places north of Baghdad on the eve of the battle, and I sanctioned the raid. (In the battle itself he had charged himself with the mission of destroying the bridge over the Diala by bombing.) Evening came, darkness fell, and he had not returned. I knew that he must have come to grief, but hoped that, if an accident had happened to his machine, he might find his way to the river. But

Fate was against him. During the siege of Kut I learnt from the Arabs that his machine was seen to come down, and he was made a prisoner by the Arabs and taken to the Turks. It was very unfortunate at this moment to lose such a valuable officer.

I was now ready for battle—for which I issued my operation orders at 1.30 p. m. on 21st November. I also issued secret and confidential instructions to G.O.C. Columns and heads of departments that in case of a repulse the force would fall back on Lajj under the protection of Column "A," which would become the rearguard.



The Battle of Ctesiphon.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON

IT will be seen by the operation orders that the different columns or groups of attack proceeded to take up their positions of assembly by night marches on the night of 21st-22nd November.

C Column, composing the preparatory or frontal attack, moved out of camp at 2 p. m. The groups constituting the turning manœuvre and the Principal Mass were to march at dusk as secretly as possible, unlike the march of C Column, which was ostentatiously followed by the Divisional Troops and was so spread out as to give the idea that it was the main body of the force. Divisional Headquarters marched with the Divisional Troops at the tail of Column C.

I had lent one of my best staff officers, Captain Morland, of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, to General Delamain for the battle. He and Lt. Matthews, R.E., were to guide the combined Columns B and A along the track leading north and west from Lajj. This would bring them to the various positions of assembly. I had left half the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry—from Hoghton's brigade, or C Column—to guard the ship convoy at Lajj. Every other combatant was in the ranks. I had a

total of 40 guns, including those on the gunboats; of guns on land only the field batteries and howitzer battery were mobile—22 in all. At the last moment I gave the howitzer battery to Delamain to help him in the attack on the vital point designated in my orders, and for sweeping the Turkish trenches, which we knew to be very strong and numerous in that locality. Sir John Nixon and the Headquarter Staff accompanied me. It must have been about 8 p. m. when C Column found itself on the bank of the river at Bustan, and watered, which was not an easy matter in the darkness, since the terrain was covered with thick, high grass and patches of cultivation, intersected by ditches and watercuts. I did not feel happy until the watering of the troops was over and all were concentrated for a long halt.

I had given strict orders about lights and smoking. I had announced that I would try by Court Martial anyone caught at this practice when on a night march. In my experience with British and Indian troops it is very hard to prevent on such occasions. I soon saw someone coolly light up, and, on going up to him, found it was one of the Headquarter Staff officers. I do not think he has forgotten that night and my rebuke! He is a good officer, and did very good work in the battle in rallying runaways, etc.; I offered him a cigarette in the middle of it to show him that I bore no ill-feeling.

Column C moved on after a long halt and halted for the remainder of the night in what was judged to be approximately its position, and at daylight it

moved forward towards the enemy's position some 3,000 yards distant. Hoghton felt his way cautiously on a widely extended front and I received news from Melliss, Hamilton and Delamain that the other groups of attack were in their places ready. All had gone well in the night marches of the combined columns and, as all were properly in their places, I took up my position with the Divisional Staff near the guns.

The entrenchments and redoubts forming the Turkish defensive position of Ctesiphon on the left bank of the Tigris extended fully six miles from the river bank northward. They were absolutely invisible. My map of them—wonderfully accurate considering the difficulties—had been made entirely by Major Reilly in his flights over the position. All that could be seen was a vast plain with the renowned and imposing Arch of Ctesiphon towering up as a landmark for many miles around, and the group of tombs around it, including the famous one of Salman Pak.

Hoghton's advance of the Minimum Force continued cautiously. He feared a trap; it was impossible to believe that the right half of the Turkish position was not occupied. Still, Hoghton was getting close and had not drawn fire. The enemy was evidently waiting to let him come close in, and Hoghton was not to be caught. So the exasperating delay went on. Seven o'clock came, 7.30, and still there was no firing from C Column or the enemy opposite. Evidently the Turks had orders not to fire till Hogh-

ton came to close range. Thus when Hamilton with the turning attack sent me a message about 7.45 a. m., asking whether he should advance as he did not hear the guns of Column C, I answered in the affirmative. At 8 o'clock the turning attack started to move on its objective, a section of the Turkish second position or line of entrenchments shown dotted in the map, because they were not completely formed up. Before long we heard a roar of musketry to the northward, showing that the turning attack was engaged. This inspired the Turkish right wing at last to open on C Column, and our Divisional Artillery and the gunboats on the river joining in, the battle became general, the fire continually increasing in violence and intensity.

The events of the battle now began to develop and succeed each other in a kaleidoscopic manner and with flash-light kodak speed. I suppose it must have been the right of Hamilton's turning attack swinging round behind their left flank and so menacing their line of retreat which caused large bodies of Turks to abandon the first position and fall back on the second. The enemy could be seen retreating in masses, and, about the same time as I noticed this, General Delamain sent a message: "The enemy are in full retreat. May I advance on 'V.P.' with the Principal Mass?" I replied in the affirmative—it was in accordance with my plans. I had intended to throw the Principal Mass against "V.P." as soon as Hamilton's turning attack began to affect the enemy seriously, but I never imagined that their resistance would col-

lapse so soon.[1] I resolved to join the Principal Mass, as this might well mean a general advance on the Diala with a disorderly flight of the enemy in front of us. Having ordered C Column to assume a vigorous offensive, as the Principal Mass had been ordered to advance on "V.P." and having notified all G.O.C. Columns and the G.O.C. Divisional Artillery of my change of position, I galloped across towards "V.P." where a fierce fight was raging. Seeing what was evidently the staff of the English general galloping across the plain, the enemy's guns opened a brisk fire on us, and pitched some shells fairly close.

The Principal Mass, led by the 30th Brigade under the gallant Climo, carried "V.P." after a short and very fierce fire and bayonet fight in the most brilliant manner. Many of the Turks fought hand-to-hand till the end, whilst others left their entrenchments in flight. In some places I saw the trenches filled up with dead and dying Turks, and many of our own men strewed the route of the assailants in the advance up to the earth-works, Gurkhas and Punjabis being particularly noticeable. A mass of entangled wire

[1] It might appear at first sight that, if the Turkish commander had known his business, he might have extricated himself from our grasp by a short movement in retreat, in order to bring the enveloping attack into an embarrassing situation. That it was not so, is apparent on studying the plan of battle, when it will be seen that from the outset I had directed my turning attack under General Hamilton, and the Cavalry Brigade under General Melliss, against the flank of the Turkish *second position*. A great part of the Turkish troops, moreover, stood their ground in the first position, where desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place, a whole division being annihilated at "V.P." and its neighbourhood.

and deep trenches compelled us to dismount near "V.P." and in getting to Delamain, with whom I wanted to speak in a place where I had to traverse a length of trench, the dead lay so thick together that we literally walked on the bodies. I found him sheltered behind a sand hillock, for the spot was under fire from some Turks cut off from retreat and installed in a redoubt some 700 yards south of "V.P.," and he explained his dispositions to me.

He had pushed on the Principal Mass, still led by the gallant 30th Brigade under Climo, against the Turkish second line of entrenchments west of "V.P." where the enemy were endeavouring to rally. This line was some 3,500 yards distant from "V.P." I saw he had detached a company or two of the Dorsets to move south from "V.P." directing themselves towards the Arch of Ctesiphon. He explained that they were under Major Utterson and their object was to give a helping hand to General Hoghton, as their advance would induce the retreat of the enemy opposing C Column.

I ordered Evans to send a message to Hoghton to bring up his left shoulders and move on "V.P." for I saw that the battle was by no means finished. The enemy were making a fight for the second position, and it behoved me quickly to concentrate C Column on "V.P." in support of Column A, the Principal Mass; the right wing of the Turks must retreat, I reckoned, if left to themselves—and is obvious by a glance at the map, which shows how they were now situated in the bottom of a bottle; and so it happened,

although, as a matter of fact, they escaped along the river bank at night.

In all my experience of war I have never seen or heard of anything so fine as the deliberate and tranquil advance of the thin chain of Dorsets in extended order, moving south from "V.P."—the Turks in bunches evacuating trenches in front of them and making their way towards the Arch of Ctesiphon. If only the gunboats would now appear by the Arch! But they were held up, and could not advance beyond Bustan. The Turkish heavy guns at the bottom of the river loop, installed on the right bank, kept them at a most respectful distance. Had they succeeded in passing and come up near Qusabah, how different things might have been! It must not be inferred by this that I consider that they should have forced their way through. I am certain they did their duty, as the Navy always did most nobly, and the assistance they rendered and the share they took in my two former battles will have been seen. I have no doubt that the difficulties to be overcome were too serious to permit their advance on this occasion. The retreat of the Turkish troops of the left wing to the second position was being covered by very heavy and well sustained artillery fire from field guns, now installed in their second line, and especially from heavy guns on the right bank of the river near the boat-bridge, which enfiladed the advance of A Column in its assault on the second position, but did not check it. I had fixed Divisional Headquarters at "V.P." and the enemy's guns across the river paid me particular at-

tention, for shells continued to burst all about me, and I had constantly to keep shifting my place and walking about to avoid them. Sir John Nixon and the Headquarters Staff arrived at "V.P." about the time that the leading brigade, again the 30th Brigade of A Column, pierced the enemy's second position in an assault with the bayonet and took six to eight guns, for which honour Dorsets, Gurkhas and Punjabis all competed. The fact that the Dorsets were in front, and that they did not belong to the 30th Brigade, showed how mixed up the troops were by this time.

I was glad to be able to tell Sir John Nixon that everything was going well; but now a change to our disadvantage took place in the aspect of affairs. Hamilton sent a message to inform me that he was meeting with strenuous opposition. He could only advance with great difficulty. He had managed to reach the second position and had effected a lodgement, but now the enemy, in large numbers, were pressing him. I understood his message to read that he was checked and held up. The Cavalry Column under Melliss, on whom I had counted to keep off this counter-attack by the aid of his Horse Artillery and to enfilade the whole of the Turkish second position from its extreme left flank, had also met with serious difficulties. The cavalry dismounted to attack the left of the entrenchments, but had been able to make no progress, the Turkish reserve at Qusabah having occupied this part of the position. Melliss sent in the 76th Punjabis, who were in support of the cavalry, with the bayonet, and they carried their ob-

jective in fine style. One or two Turkish battalions ran away from the trenches, as the Punjabis advanced to the assault. The Cavalry Brigade had begun to work round the extremity of the second-line entrenchments, when they were vigorously counter-attacked in flank by large bodies of infantry advancing against Melliss' Column, which was in consequence pushed back practically to where it started from. This was the entry on the scene of the leading division of Khalil's Army Corps, which had been sent down from the Caucasus. It was regarded in the Turkish Army as a crack corps, and Khalil had a reputation as a thrusting commander. This new army corps was being sent down river from Baghdad by steamer and barges, and I take this to be the reason why no arrival of reinforcements to the enemy from Baghdad had been signalled to me by the air service, for my operation orders show that I had not overlooked this contingency. The Cavalry Brigade had 200 men killed and wounded out of some 1,200 sabres. The 76th Punjabis also lost severely, and their Colonel, Smithett, a very gallant officer, was killed at this juncture.

It was about 11 a.m. when Hamilton with the turning attack, which was headed by the Norfolks and the 110th Light Infantry (with the 7th Rajputs and 120th Infantry in support), managed to effect a lodgement in the second position of the Turks. He was soon held, and could advance no further. He had suffered severely, and he was soon counter-attacked by the Turks, rallied by the arrival of Khalil.

The arrival of the latter saved Nureddin from defeat, and the Turks now took the counter-offensive in an attempt to throw the British out of the second position, in which our troops were now installing themselves.

It was just past midday, and all reports coming into the Divisional Headquarters at "V.P." clearly indicated that the enemy had received reinforcements and had assumed a general counter-offensive; while a violent bombardment of our troops in the Turkish second position was maintained without relaxation, in which the heavy guns of the enemy on the right bank bore a prominent part. The wounded were coming back to the rear in large numbers, and I was much concerned to see that in many cases they were accompanied by unwounded combatants, in direct contradiction to my orders. This showed me that the casualties amongst officers must be great, and control was therefore being lost. I had given the same strict orders on this subject before the battle of Kut-al-Amara, where they were obeyed perfectly, for I did not lose many officers in that battle and so better control was kept. At this critical time I could do nothing to stop this, but it indicated to me clearly how badly things were going. Colonel Climo[2] was carried past me severely wounded in three places, but quite cheery. This gallant soldier would have been a great loss to me at any time, but at such a critical moment it was a disaster.

I had not a man left to throw into the Principal

[2] Now Major-General Climo.

Mass. If I had had—I will not say the extra division that I needed—but even *another brigade*, we should have swept the Turks into the Tigris. This is a fact no one present at the battle can deny. It was hard to stand there and realise that victory was slipping from my grasp for the want of a few troops.

Now the plain became dotted with hundreds of our troops walking slowly back towards "V.P." It soon became apparent that a retirement was taking place, though no orders had been given for one. It was evident that all control must have been lost owing to very heavy casualties amongst the British officers of Indian units. Here were hundreds of Indian soldiers streaming to the rear, because there were not enough white officers to keep them steady and in hand. I utilised all my staff, and borrowed Sir John Nixon's—even General Kemball—to gallop about and lead, and even *drive*, the men back to the combat. Fine work these staff officers [3] did under the heavy fire, for I realised that, if I did not stop the wholesale retirement by some means or other, a veritable rout would set in. The same thing has often happened and will continue to happen at critical times in a battle, when the fire and losses are intense. It happened to our troops at the most critical time of the battle of the Alma, it happened at Inkerman, at how many battles of Wellington in the Peninsular? And on what a scale at Waterloo! It has happened in France in this war. There was nothing to be sur-

[3] Including my friend of the cigarette incident of the night before, whom I took care to mention in despatches.

prised at—the pity was I had no reserve to throw in. The sight of the other troops advancing would have made all these men turn and go back with them. However, I was not in a parlous state, though I had had great losses. I determined that at least I would hold the first position that I had taken, that I would bivouac on the field of battle and hope that the Turks, who had lost enormously, would retreat beyond the Diala in the night—and that is what happened. My 8,500 bayonets had driven four divisions of Turks, supported by a more numerous artillery than mine, out of a most strong defensive position, composed of a veritable network of modern redoubts, trenches, and communication ways, and there is *no soldier in Europe*—I underline that statement—to compare with the Turk when on the defensive and entrenched.

The German is supposed to be good on the defensive, but when in trenches he cannot compare with the Turk—as a proof of which I give the example of Gallipoli, where, owing to severe losses at one sector from the effects of the fire from our ships, the German troops would not remain, and had to be replaced by Turks. As can be easily imagined, I was not surprised that I could not make a decisive victory of Ctesiphon with 8,500 bayonets.

The Turkish infantry-man is a better fighter now than he was in the Turco-Russian War of 1877-78, where he was generally miserably led by officers ignorant of the smallest duties of company or battalion commanders. Their officers now are far better educated, and are all from the Military School, while the

ranker class of 1877 has been eliminated. Last but not least, a large percentage of picked German officers served in Mesopotamia to keep the Turkish officers up to the mark. The war with Bulgaria, where the infantry behaved so badly, seems to have misled the whole of Europe as to the fighting powers of the Turk. Everyone in Turkey, every Turkish officer, will at once inform you that the reason for their defeat by the Bulgars was because all religious element had been stupidly disregarded by the "Young Turk" party, to which the Turkish Generals were compelled to belong; and without the religious "touch" the Anatolian soldier, who is the flower of the Turkish army, would not fight. He does not and will not understand patriotism, nor does he care, I believe, for the *patrie*—but his religion is his life and world, and for that he will fight in the most dogged and tenacious manner. The Young Turkish party quickly recognised the error, and in this war appeals for the support of the *Tout puissant* were almost as common in the Turkish bulletins and *communiqués* as in the German.

When I think of what the Sixth Division did at Ctesiphon, the British battalions of which were only three in number, and of the strength of half battalions before going into battle, while the Indian battalions were composed in great part of raw recruits, I am not surprised that the Press at home called them the "Invincibles"; and I am perfectly convinced that no body of men ever had harder fighting, be it in the Peninsular War, the Crimea, or even in the great war

in France or Gallipoli. I am certain that no body of troops has had a harder task to carry out, nor has had to face such great odds.

And I am also convinced that a solid General Reserve kept in the hand of the Commander-in-Chief in a battle is an absolute necessity.

The Staff Officers rallied numbers of men, pushing them, literally, back into the fight, but the result was a complete muddle of units now irretrievably mixed. A great percentage of our officers had fallen, striving by example to animate the troops to hold up against the Turkish counter-attack. Again I saw my troops begin slowly to fall back, followed by the Turks, who retook the captured guns, from which, however, our people removed the breech-blocks. The fire became more violent than ever.

As soon as I could get hold of Hoghton's brigade I sent it forward on the offensive, moving it south of Delamain's Principal Mass in retreat, in order to take the strain off him and to check the Turkish advance. In this I succeeded, for the retirement of the Principal Mass on the "V.P." redoubts and entrenchments was unmolested except by artillery fire. By now it must have been between 5.30 and 6 p. m. On the position we had captured I intended to stand, to unite all my force, to bivouac on the battle-field, reorganise units, and attack again next morning. Very likely, I thought—and told Sir John Nixon—the Turks, who had lost enormously (one division had been practically annihilated by Delamain's attack on "V.P.") would retire behind the Diala in the night.

And it was so; the enemy left me in possession of the battle-field, and we are taught in military history that a force which will not abandon the ground it has fought on will be finally considered victorious. Without molestation they allowed me to unite my shattered force into one block at "V.P." and its neighbourhood—no easy manœuvre, as will be admitted when the extent of the turning move, Melliss's and Hamilton's attacks, are looked at on the map. I was not easy in my mind till this union had taken place. I now realised by the streams of wounded brought to "V.P." and the shattered condition of the brigades—not one of which, I found later, was equal to the size of a British battalion on war strength—that I was in no condition to resume the offensive. Hoghton's brigade consisted of some 700 men of all units mixed up; Delamain had about 1,000, he told me; and Hamilton 800 or 900 men left. We had lost 4,000 killed and wounded out of 8,500 bayonets, for the whole loss was on the infantry, as is always the case when a position has to be taken. It was clear to me that I must take up a defensive attitude with my concentrated force, and await further developments, hoping that the Turks would retreat, owing to their terrible losses.

Having rallied and united my force at "V.P.," I took up a defensive position in the entrenchments in that locality, with my right flank resting on "V.P. redoubt." Before I had fully realised the extent of my losses, however, and the disorder of brigades and units, I dictated this order:—

"The troops are to make good the position won to-day. The offensive will be continued to-morrow. C Column will install itself in the entrenchments from 'V.P.' to one mile south, B Column will continue the line to the south, and A Column will defend the entrenchments towards the river."

I directed my G.S.O., I., to order the S.N.O. to advance his gunboats level with my left flank, and the O.C. Supply Column at Lajj to send me a food convoy on the morrow. As General Hoghton's Brigade-Major had been killed, I took Morland away from General Delamain and lent him to Hoghton.

However, on realising that night the shattered condition of my force, and considering the distance I was from home, I did not dare risk a reverse. There was no question, therefore, of a further offensive for the present. And so I modified my previous orders as follows:—

"G.O.C.'s Columns will reorganise as soon as possible. As soon as the reorganisation is complete, I shall take up a position with the division on the river further south, to water animals and men, replenish ammunition and food, bring up the ships, and evacuate wounded. The position of the division will roughly be Square H 9 to the dividing line between Squares H 6 and H 7; troops to be aligned on the already existing Turkish works and trenches."

The Turkish loss, I reflected, must be far greater than mine. Not only were the entrenchments about

"V.P." literally choked with their dead, but also those of their second position, which we had been obliged to yield up. I knew that one Turkish division had been annihilated at "V.P.," and another in the second line. Surely they would retreat in the night "as soon as their wounds get stiff," as they did at Shaiba.

If I live a hundred years I shall not forget that night bivouac at "V.P." amongst hundreds of wounded, who were being brought in, loaded on the commissariat carts, by which they were collected for hours during the night. Their sufferings in these small, springless carts can be easily imagined; but the way in which our medical officers worked is beyond all praise.

In the morning, aeroplane reconnaissance soon made me aware that the Turkish forces had retreated to the Diala River, seven or eight miles away, where they were seen busy digging in and improving the position behind the Diala that they had previously begun in that locality. A small rearguard detachment of one or two battalions was in the second position collecting wounded. They had also removed their boat-bridge at Qusabah, and it was seen being towed up-river to the Diala mouth. Thus all the right of the enemy's position about the Arch of Ctesiphon was evacuated.

I knew now that they had received large reinforcements and were preparing to give battle again on the defensive behind the Diala. Had I been in a condition to resume the offensive with boldness and vigour, it will be seen, by a glance at my project of operations

drawn up at Azizieh, that I should, of course, have now transferred my force to the right bank and moved on Baghdad on that side of the river, thus compelling the Turks to quit the line of the Diala and fall back on that city. But daylight on 23rd November impressed me still more with the conviction of the hopelessness of resuming the offensive. Moreover, I must move—and speedily—on to the water, for neither animals nor men had received any (except in bottles) since leaving Lajj on the evening of the 21st; a few horses only had been watered in the river near the Arch of Ctesiphon, which was now clear of enemy. No water can be found in this part of Mesopotamia away from the rivers, thus rendering turning manœuvres of any extent very difficult to execute.

In the morning of 23rd November, I accordingly shifted my position to a more southward part of the Turkish position—the troops being installed in a network of entrenchments. In front of us towered the great Arch of Ctesiphon, which in the time of the Romans stood within the walls of the city, about 2,000 yards away, with the tomb of the barber of the Prophet, Salman Pak, close by.

One thousand yards behind my position—where I placed a General Reserve—were the "High Walls of Ctesiphon." This consists of two sides of a square of very high mounds exactly like the remains of Roman camps in England and France, and is said to be the remains of the citadel of the Roman fortified town of Ctesiphon. The battle was fought on the actual site

of the walled city of Ctesiphon, which the famous Belisarius, the last of the brilliant soldiers of the Roman Empire, then tottering to its end at Constantinople in the reign of Justinian, reached as his furthest point south in the course of his famous campaigns to recover Mesopotamia from the Persians. The trace of the first Turkish position was all along the foundations of the ancient wall, which from "V.P." trended away in small mounds to the northward.

The shifting of the Division was carried out in tranquillity, but to my extreme concern I had to leave C Column under Brigadier-General Hoghton at "V.P." owing to the slow evacuation of wounded to the High Wall of Ctesiphon. By sunset only half had been evacuated, although the utmost exertion and energy had been put into this vitally important matter. As the day came to a close I saw that this delay was of the gravest importance, for it would compel me to disseminate my small force. The Turks would have seen my movement, and naturally would ascribe it to a retreat, for although I was not quitting the position, yet the movement of the carts between High Wall and "V.P." with wounded would be ascribed to a retirement. Therefore I expected to be attacked during the night, since I had to leave C Column, reduced to some 700 fighting men, plus a field battery, at "V.P." to guard the large numbers of wounded still at the redoubt. There was no help for it. All I could do was to hope the Turks would not move till the next morning, when I should be able

to finish the evacuation of the wounded and bring off C Column to the new position by means of an offensive manœuvre with the bulk of my force.

Sure enough, in the evening, the Turks were seen advancing from the Diala in great masses. Now came a time of grave anxiety. I happened to have ridden to see the position General Delamain had taken up at the time the attack of the Turks was announced, and such was my anxiety that I decided to make my post with his command on the right of the line. Hamilton was on the left, Melliss with the General Reserve in the High Wall.

The enemy's Principal Mass attacked us with great violence at about 9 p. m. The night was very dark, and at least six attacks came on with the utmost fury, each being repulsed. At times groups of the enemy nearly succeeded in forcing their way into our trenches, so close did they get. The roar of musketry went on for hours and the expenditure of ammunition was a matter of the gravest concern and anxiety to Delamain and myself. The men were constantly being told to husband the ammunition, but the attacks had to be repelled, or all was over with us. I reinforced Delamain with the Norfolks, taken from Hamilton, as he was not severely pressed. As usual Delamain was worth his weight in gold, always calm, collected, business-like, and exercising absolute control—and all soldiers know the difficulty of control when fighting becomes almost hand-to-hand in trenches. In one place the Turks got into our trenches, but were bombed out again by the grena-

diers of the Dorsets, leaving some twenty killed and wounded behind and a few unhurt prisoners, one of the latter, an Anatolian, being quite a giant. At one time some of the Indiar soldiers began to quit the outer trenches, but Delamain rushed forward and rallied them back again into the abandoned trench. At another time the attack came so close that I thought the last moment had come, and instinctively unbuttoned the holster-flap of my pistol.

Throughout this trying night General Hoghton was a source of the greatest anxiety to me; his messages were frequent, and all to the effect that he feared he could hold out no longer. He was being attacked by the enemy's smaller column, and we could see the flashes lighting up the night all round "V.P." and the replying flashes of our people in that redoubt. He said he was running out of ammunition; his battery had only a few rounds left, and unless I could reinforce him he thought all would soon be over. My replies were always to the same effect: "You must hold on as you are; we are being pressed more closely than you. To reinforce you is impossible; I will extricate you to-morrow."

After some hours all was silent at "V.P." I could get no message through, and I feared the worst had happened, and felt the gravest anxiety for all the wounded at "V.P." But at last I received a message from Hoghton saying that the enemy had ceased their attacks. It was then about 2 a. m. I at once called for volunteers to go out from High Wall with the carts and take ammunition to Hoghton, and to

bring in wounded from "V.P." This was most successfully and gallantly accomplished. It was even betting that they would be attacked on the way out, for the noise of the cart wheels jolting over the rough track could be heard as far off certainly as three or four thousand yards on a quiet night. That they were not cut up is due to the fact that the Turks had retired under cover of the darkness. The names of those who did this went in afterwards in my despatches, together with those of many others who performed most gallant actions in this, the most desperate fighting phase of the Ctesiphon operations.

When the morning of 24th November came there was no enemy in sight. Aerial reconnaissance reported his retreat again to the Diala, evacuating the wounded of the night before. I made an offensive manœuvre out to "V.P." in the meantime with the Reserve Brigade to bring in Hoghton's Column and the wounded convoy to High Wall. I withdrew Delamain's and Hamilton's brigades, and in the early forenoon had my entire force united in my hand at High Wall, and all the wounded evacuated to Bustan, where they were put on the ships and sent off to Kut. I replenished ammunition, food and water for the force, and was again ready for all events. Thus all immediate anxiety was removed from my mind.

I could now give myself up to quiet thought and reflection concerning the position of my shattered force. From a strategical and tactical point of view, the situation was as bad as could possibly be imagined

—that was evident. Never in the history of civilised warfare have we seen small unsupported bodies successfully opposed to large ones, except in savage warfare, or war in India and on its North-West frontier, and in Afghanistan, where the fundamental principles of war may sometimes be violated with impunity.

I knew that the next step of the enemy, with that overwhelming superiority of force, would naturally be to turn my position with his Principal Mass, and get astride my line of retreat, whilst he pinned me to my ground in front by an attack with a minimum force. That is what I should have done from the commencement of the counter-offensive, had I been the Turkish Commander-in-Chief; and I should never have expended my men in a hazardous night attack on the British entrenched front. His great superiority of numbers easily permitted such a manœuvre, executed by night so as to conceal the turning movement. I saw that I should have to retire, in spite of political reasons. I was sufficiently a student of military history to know that once a general permits political reasons to interfere with strategical ones, that general is lost. All military history proves it.

Full of these thoughts I arrived at High Wall, and found that Sir John Nixon and his staff had left for Kut. He had left General Kemball, his Chief of Staff, to have a talk with me. I told him what I intended to do—that I was not going to let political reasons endanger the force; if it were annihilated the whole of Mesopotamia would fall like a ripe plum into the hands of the Turks. But I was not going to

retire a moment before it became necessary to do so, and I sent out aerial and cavalry reconnaissances to determine what the Turks were doing. They were certainly not going to retire from the Diala, and, whilst parties were burying our dead within a radius of two miles, I occupied myself in thinking out my position and in installing the troops at High Wall in the best possible manner for defence. We were being shelled intermittently by the big Turkish guns in position at the bottom of the loop of the river, on the right bank of the Tigris. I now learnt that it was the fire of these particular guns which had prevented the naval flotilla from advancing beyond Bustan during the battle of 22nd November, so that their co-operation had been forcedly confined to long and distant fire instead of co-operation at effective and even close ranges, as had been the case at the battles of Kurna and Kut-al-Amara. What would not have been the result if they could have appeared on the river at the southern end of the Turkish second-line position at the moment when I was attacking it with the infantry? Victory would not then have been in doubt. There would have been no rally of the defeated Turkish troops. The rout must have continued to the Diala, where their only boat-bridge would have been rammed and destroyed. It will be seen by reference to the map how, in addition to the Turkish big guns, the enemy's works and entrenchments also enfiladed the gunboats' line of approach at a range of under 1,000 yards. I had reckoned on the flight of the Turkish troops composing this wing

directly I had overwhelmed the left flank of it at "V.P."; but as a matter of fact the bulk remained at their posts till nightfall.

We sustained very little loss on 24th November from the distant fire of the Turkish big guns, though it was quite accurate, and the High Wall of Ctesiphon made a most conspicuous target. But we were lucky. Although they pitched their shells into the terrain occupied by the troops, it was extraordinary how many horses, mules and men were *not* hit. An officer of R.E. was killed—and I had a sufficiently near squeak of it whilst shaving, a shell passing just over me and half smothering me in a tremendous cloud of dust when it struck the ground and exploded.

I deliberated whether I should send the cow guns to take on these guns, silence them, and thus enable my gunboats to pass the lines of Ctesiphon at its southern extremity; but my dangerous flank was the northern one. By this I should eventually be turned by the enemy, who would march straight on Lajj. I had made up my mind that I should have to retire at least to that place, and again I might at any moment expect to hear that the Turks were advancing from the Diala. I realised that if pinned again to the ground by the enemy in an attack in great numbers it would mean the end of the Sixth Division, which had reached its limit of endurance.

The day of the 24th and night of 24th-25th was quiet. On fully considering matters I decided to retire leisurely to Lajj on the morning of 26th November, and indicated my orders to my G.S.O., I.,

on the morning of the 25th, regrouping the reduced division into two Columns only:—A Column, General Delamain, comprising the 16th and 18th Infantry Brigades, and B Column, General Sir Charles Melliss, comprising the 30th and 17th Infantry Brigades. This regrouping was necessary owing to the heavy losses, which had reduced each of the brigades to the strength of a British battalion. The Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Roberts, of course remained unchanged.

Preliminary Order issued to the Division:—

"25 November, 1915.

"The Division will hold itself in readiness to march to Lajj, some 6 miles, at about 2 p. m. to-morrow, 26th November.

"The Divisional Train is to hold itself in readiness to march the moment ordered.

"Complete orders will follow later."

At first I intended to move the main body in two columns abreast, in order to facilitate manœuvre if attacked, but I found that the terrain is so thickly scrubbed and bushed between Lajj and Ctesiphon that I decided to move in one column, covered by Column A, under General Delamain, as rearguard, with the divisional artillery to keep the enemy at a respectful distance. The Cavalry Brigade was also attached to the rearguard.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETIREMENT TO KUT

ON November 25th, 1915, I issued my orders for the retirement to Lajj, and also two *communiqués* to the British and Indian troops composing the division, with the object of keeping up their *moral* during the retreat—that most difficult of all military operations in which, as past military history shows, the British soldier is very prone to get out of hand.

Even knowing my command as well as I did, I considered it necessary to speak confidentially to the men as to our situation, and to appeal indirectly to their sympathy and their common sense—and thus to obtain hearty co-operation, and consequently perfect discipline. I hoped also that the *communiqués* would establish confidence and silence "croakers," of whom, experience has taught me, some are always to be found in any fairly large body of men.

Communiqué to the Indian Troops.

"To be explained carefully by Commanding Officers to the Indian Officers to communicate to their men.

"It must be fully understood by the troops that the

reason why I am moving back to Lajj is because of the food question. There is a road from Baghdad, which comes in between us here and Lajj, where the enemy could with guns stop my ships. I do not want my troops to be starved nor to make them live in constant want of water. In short it is *akal ki bat* (question of food) which takes us back to Lajj. Many troops, who are coming from France and will reach Basra in a week or ten days' time, will join this force to take Baghdad."

Communiqué to British and Indian Troops.

"Sir John Nixon has expressed in his Army Order his sentiments in the very words I would have chosen myself. I cannot express my admiration and gratitude for the heroism displayed by all ranks. To show with what stern valour you fought, you drove four divisions out of a very strong position and forced them to retire beyond the Diala River. But our numbers were too few to put them to rout; we have had 4,000 men killed and wounded, the Turks losing many more than this figure. You have added a brilliant page to the glorious battle roll of the Army in India, and you will be proud to tell them at home that you fought at the battle of Ctesiphon.

The troops must know that I have ordered a move back to Lajj for the following reasons:

(1) Food and supply question. The ships are exposed to fire on the river at Bustan, and the enemy can with cavalry accompanied by guns stop their progress up river to opposite this camp.

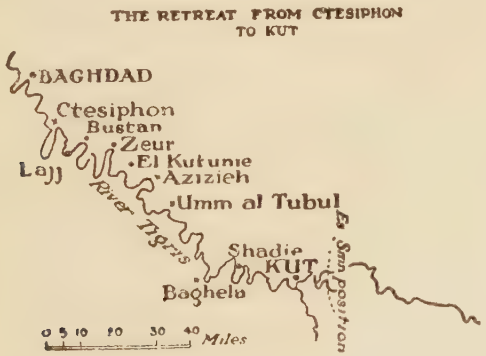
(2) At Lajj I can await in security the arrival of reinforcements at Basra from France and Egypt due in a week's time.

The ships at Lajj are in security.

Three more monitors are promised to me in a few days."

In the afternoon, as I anticipated, aerial reconnaissance reported the advance of three large columns, estimated at one division each, from the Diala moving south towards us; another large column was marching separately to the north-eastward, moving evidently to execute the turning manœuvre I had expected. It was further reported that the Principal Mass of the enemy had halted in the evening, reoccupying the Turkish second position.

I saw that I must retreat this night (25th November) if I did not wish to be hooked on to and turned. Accordingly orders were issued confidentially to all brigade commanders and heads of departments to start the march twelve hours sooner than the time mentioned in my original orders.



I marched at 8.30 p. m. in one column. The rearguard followed quietly behind without a single shot, although the enemy were close at hand. The manœuvre was carried out with precision and silence, and the night march was executed under good conditions. In the neighbourhood of Bustan, where we touched the river, we came across several boxes of small-arm ammunition lying here and there about the road, which seemed to indicate a panic amongst the transport drivers [1] of the Divisional Train, who may have seen Arab horsemen. The rearguard halted and collected most of the boxes, which were put on board a gunboat we discovered lying close to the bank. At one of our hourly halts in the night I was standing and talking with some of the Staff when I saw in the moonlight ten or twelve horsemen galloping towards us from the desert. They evidently thought we were some of the convoy and galloped, yelling, almost into us. A section of infantry had to open fire, and they turned about and galloped off.

On arrival at Lajj early in the morning of 26th November, in drizzling rain, I sent the following telegram to the Army Commander, who had gone to Kut-al-Amara:—

"I adhere very strongly to my telegram of 25th November. I consider that with 4,500 casualties, which is the total, and where the brigades are reduced to little more than a full-strength British battalion, it would be madness to have remained at Ctesi-

[1] I ascertained afterwards that this had been the case.

phon a moment longer than I did. At 4 p. m. yesterday three large Turkish columns, estimated by the air service at 5,000 each, were advancing from their entrenched line covering the Diala north of Qusabah, and at 5 p. m. were in sight, moving along the river bank, one at a turning distance inland, whilst a hostile cavalry brigade menaced Bustan (on my line of retreat). There is no question of my engaging such a force in my present state, with the men worn out. So I waited till darkness and moved off in the dark to Lajj, where I am entrenching and going to make myself comfortable. Remember you agreed before to my Lajj reasons. I endeavoured to impose on them at Ctesiphon and I flatter myself that I extricated my force under good conditions of manœuvre, the hardest that can be imagined. Had I been attacked in the middle of such an operation, I should have been pinned down by one column and turned and cut off by the other column. You must know what the result would have been. I know well. Here I remain and demonstrate up right bank almost immediately."

I wired further:—"Air service reports that the enemy has reoccupied the second line of entrenchments at Ctesiphon and are advancing. I do not think they will venture to cross the open and attack me without their beloved entrenchments. I hope you will approve of what I have done to the best of my judgment. Nothing will alter my opinion that I have acted for the best. Troops sent up to Kut-al-Amara will keep Arabs (on line of communications) tran-

quil, but I want a post at Jumeisa—a battalion and a couple of post guns to ensure free passage of river defiles for boats."

On 27th November at Lajj, I telegraphed in the morning to the M.G.G.S. that I was roughly entrenching a camp at Lajj. By this I meant light entrenchments merely to give camp security, and I told him I had thrown a bridge across, with a *tête du pont* occupied by half a battalion. I said that I did not require any more supplies or engineer stores sent up to Lajj (I had ten days' supplies for British troops and seven for the Indian troops there), as I desired to concentrate our force for the advance on Baghdad at Azizieh and not Lajj. The latter place was much too close to the enemy, and one should concentrate to the rear and not to the front. The enemy would never permit me to remain at Lajj unmolested. Azizieh was a more desirable place in every way, and I intended to march there as soon as I had eaten up my supplies. I supposed, I said, that I should have two divisions to advance with, and I asked him to give me some indications as to the date when the force could be concentrated. The shipping question would be a difficult one, and I imagined that it would be late in December before we could advance. I asked how long it would take to equip the new division with the peculiar means of transport obtaining in Mesopotamia, and said that it would appear that at least two and a half months were required for this. Finally I pointed out that Lajj camp would be under water at the end of Jan-

uary and, I believed, Azizieh also. Thus every reason indicated Kut as my final halt.

No sooner had I sent the above telegram when an air service reconnaissance indicated the approach of the enemy in strength from Ctesiphon on Lajj, estimating his force at 12,000 infantry in two columns, and 400 cavalry. This was the advanced guard of the Turkish 6th Army. I decided to fall back the same afternoon on Azizieh and to do the twenty-two miles in one march. I began to see that there was no halting on the Baghdad side of Kut-al-Amara, if the enemy really intended an offensive with large forces. If he once hooked on to my little force I should be pinned down and surrounded. Basra was a long way from Lajj, and I knew that no reinforcements could reach me before late in December. I immediately dictated to my G.S.O., I., the following preliminary order for retirement:—"The Division will hold itself in instant readiness to march to Azizieh, preceded by the Divisional Train:—

Rear Guard..	16th and 18th Brigades Divisional Artillery Cavalry Brigade	General Delamain.
Main Body... (1) 30th Brigade In 2 columns (2) 17th Brigade abreast. Divisional Troops		

Escort to Divisional Train—1 battalion—the train to precede the Division by one mile distance.

Ship Convoy—under escort of the Naval Flotilla—will move when ready to Azizieh."

I moved off in the afternoon in two columns, covering the move of the ships. The enemy was only some three and a half miles distant when my columns moved off.

I marched through the night *viâ* Zeur and El Kutunie to Azizieh, where I halted during 28th and 29th November. There I was glad to find the 14th Hussars and half a battalion of West Kents (belonging to the 12th Division) sent up to reinforce me.

Just before moving from Lajj I received a telegram from the M.G.G.S. in answer to mine of 27th November:—

"Army Commander entirely approves your proposals and leaves decisions to you on the spot. He knows you will not retire without reason. We hope to have the leading troops of 28th (Indian) Brigade up with you by 15th December, and to follow them up with 24th and 25th Brigades. The two divisions will be concentrated forward as soon as possible."

I wired to M.G.G.S., informing him of the above move in retirement to Azizieh by a night march, and the reason of it, and added: "My air service reports on morning of 28th November formation of large camps at Ctesiphon. One column was moving into Lajj and the other column had turned Lajj by way of the desert."

I followed this wire up by another to the M.G.G.S.:

"It seems abundantly clear that the enemy received large reinforcements prior to battle of Ctesiphon.

The troops reported in my 18 G of to-day appear to me to be the advanced guard of an Army Corps. I expect he will advance to Zeur, but if he moves from that place to attack me here I shall again refuse battle and fall back to Kut-al-Amara in all probability, as Kut is a strategic point we are bound to hold, and is a concentration zone for the reinforcements coming from over seas. My principal objective is to gain time for the concentration of these reinforcements and I must avoid battle for the present, using Fabian tactics. Should he follow me to Kut, so much the better. We ought to destroy him in that case, but personally I do not think he will fight below Zeur, so far away from his beloved entrenchments at Ctesiphon. The further we get him from Baghdad the more chance in the next battle of our knocking him out altogether. At Kurna we defeated Arab troops with a reserve of Turks; at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara regular Turkish battalions stiffened the Arab battalions—now we have the Turkish soldier alone. Hence the battles get more and more hard fought."

At Azizieh I evacuated all wounded and accumulated stores on board the *Mejidich* and her two barges, which sailed for Kut on 29th November.

A high wind had prevented aerial reconnaissance till the afternoon, but it was discovered later that the enemy's advanced guard, a column about a mile long, occupied El Kutunie, six miles distant, on this date. Their main body was reported at Zeur. The gunboat *Shaitan*—which had been beached near El

Kutunie to prevent it sinking, as a plate had opened —had to be abandoned under a heavy hostile artillery fire. The gun and machine-gun on her were saved, the vessel being scuttled and the essential parts of machinery removed. Thus ended the career of the plucky little *Shaitan,* an armoured tug-boat, which had borne such a distinguished part in all the combats on the Tigris since the beginning of the campaign. I sent the Cavalry Brigade to drive off the Arabs, who from the left bank were subjecting the naval crew working on the *Shaitan* to a heavy fire. The 14th Hussars and the 7th Lancers charged, and accounted for about 140 Arabs, who fled in all directions. The advent of the 14th Hussars (British) had put new spirit and dash into the Indian cavalry.

On arriving at Azizieh I had been disagreeably surprised to find only six days' supplies there, instead of the twenty days' British and seven days' Indian I had reckoned on. On 29th November, I evacuated the sick and wounded on board the *Mejidieh.* My A.D.C., Captain Bastow, was ill with dysentery, and I sent him off with this convoy. I also destroyed all stores and clothing which I could not take with me. I intended to retreat, but held on all the 29th in hopes of saving the clothing and equipment. I had asked for a steamer, the *Blosse Lynch,* and two barges to come from Kut for this purpose, but she did not arrive, and thus I had no alternative but to destroy. The ammunition I saved by loading it on ships.

I issued a preliminary order at midday:—

"The Division will hold itself in readiness to move south-east. The Divisional train and Supply Column—48th Pioneers. The Ship Convoy to sail at 10 a. m., 30th November."

The complete orders which followed were pencilled in my note-book as follows:—

"Information *re* the enemy has been imparted to G.O.C. Brigades. The Division will march to Umm-al-Tubul, a distance of ten miles, in one column, to-morrow, 30th November.

Time of March ..	9 a. m.
Starting Point ..	S.E. Exit of Camp.
Advanced Guard	1 Company from 30th Brigade.
Main body in order of march	30th Brigade. 17th Brigade. 16th Brigade. Divisional Troops.
Rear Guard .. Gen. Hamilton.	18th Brigade. plus 1 battery R.F.A. Cavalry Brigade.
Divisional H.Q.	At tail of Main Body."

It should be explained that my reason for making this short march to Umm-al-Tubul was because the Senior Naval Officer, Captain Nunn, R.N.,[2] said that

[2] This officer, whose services had been so valuable to me in the Kurna-Amarah operation, did not join my force till the retirement on Kut.

the navigation of the river was so difficult in its shallow state, especially in some of the bends in the Umm-al-Tubul locality, that this place was the limit of their possible journey that day. If I went further than Umm-al-Tubul some of the ships aground would surely fall into the hands of the enemy. Thus it will be seen that, owing to the ships, I was about to be overtaken by the enemy and forced to fight a battle. If I had not had to guard the ships, I should have made a twenty or twenty-four mile march, and should never have been hooked on to.

Later on in the day, I received a message from the M.G.G.S. from Kut, where he was with Sir John Nixon, asking what troops I could spare to enable the line of communications to be re-opened,[3] and when they could reach Kut. He also asked if I could spare an aeroplane to carry out a reconnaissance of Sheikh Saad on the morrow.

This was very serious news. It was no time for me to disseminate even one rifle from my small force with the enemy on my heels. But it was absolutely imperative to turn out the detachment of Turks and Arabs who were sitting astride our communications. I hoped not to give battle in my retreat, though the enemy were very near me. So I replied that I was sending Melliss and the 30th Brigade in advance of me to Kut by forced marches to deal with the situation he had described. It was lamentable having to disseminate at such a time, but I saw no help for it.

[3] This was the first I had heard of their being cut.

I also ordered the following preliminary measures to the retreat orders:—

I recalled the half battalion from the right bank guarding the bridge-head, and dismantled the boat-bridge during the night of 29th-30th November. I ordered the Divisional Train and Supply Column to be loaded up, in instant readiness to move when ordered on 30th November.

Troops were to be kept in a state of constant readiness.

The river section of 5-in. guns on barges, towed by the *Shushan* and *Mahsoudieh,* were to start at daylight on the 30th for Kut. The barbed wire was to be removed from the entrenchments at Azizieh and thrown into the river.

The ships were to sail at daylight on the 30th, under convoy of the *Comet* and *Firefly* gunboats.

The above measures were carried out, and, at 9 a.m. on the 30th, the Division marched from Azizieh southward. The burning of the store house of clothing and equipment, and the reserve barge of aviation bombs, caused a column of smoke which must have been plainly visible to the enemy at El Kutunie.

The march of the division to Umm-al-Tubul, where we arrived about midday, was effected with no incident worth mentioning. The enemy were reported to have reached Azizieh, and I was much relieved at the safe arrival of the ship convoy in the afternoon, for the reach just above that place is one of the worst in the river at this season of the year for shallow water

and constantly shifting shoals. In accordance with my promise, which I could not help but regret, I ordered Melliss with the 30th Brigade to continue his march and to proceed to Kut independently. It was arranged that he should halt about ten miles down river; and I issued the following orders regarding halt, bivouac and security arrangements:—

"1. No fresh information *re* enemy.

2. The Division will bivouac in the zones already allotted to brigades—Divisional Troops, Train and Supply Column—the troops in readiness for action and bivouacking in their battle positions.

3. Service of protection of rest and security:—

Battle outposts.[4] Each G.O.C. Brigade responsible for his front (the firing line taking the place of picquets, sentry groups thrown forward).

The Cavalry to ensure the service of security by day.

4. The troops to stand to arms one hour before daylight.

5. S.N.O. to place a gunboat in position so as to flank the up-river front of the Division in bivouac."

According to my custom when there is any possibility of fighting, I did not go to sleep. At about 9 p. m. we were shelled by what I took to be camel corps guns. They gave us a few rounds only—it may be half a dozen—and then there was silence. This served us well, for it put all the troops on the

[4] As the enemy might be expected to attack and the country was thickly covered with scrub.

alert. Delamain and I both thought we could hear the noise of cart-wheels in the distance—either that or gun-wheels. Gradually I became convinced it was the latter, which meant that the entire Turkish force must be at hand. I had been taken by the collar by having to guard the ships. I realised that it would be impossible to get off my unwieldy train and supply column, with all the Indian followers, in the middle of the night, in a country thick with scrub and following a track which could only be seen in daylight. Nor could the ships attempt to move till day.

I dictated operation orders to my G.S.O., I.:—

"9.15 p.m. If the enemy are found to be close at hand on my front, I shall attack them at daylight by a frontal and enveloping attack combined.

Frontal Attack. Eighteenth Brigade. General Hamilton.

Enveloping Attack. 16th and 17th Brigades. General Delamain.

I shall decide as soon as I can see as to giving the objective to the two commanders.

The Cavalry Brigade will co-operate on the exterior flank of the Enveloping Attack.

G.O.C.'s brigades to push forward patrols at dawn."

The Train and Supply Column I ordered to be loaded up and standing by in readiness for the march as soon as it was light enough to see.

I passed a very anxious night. I determined to re-

call Melliss with the 30th Brigade, as I needed every rifle to win this battle and to extricate myself from the clutch of the enemy.

I accordingly sent Melliss an urgent message by two British officers of the 7th Lancers, Indian Cavalry, Captain C. Trench and Lieutenant W. J. Coventry, who gallantly volunteered. I told them that I knew of the great risk they were running, as Arab horsemen must be all around, and also that I should recommend them for the V.C.[5] On the success of their mission the fate of the Division probably rested. They took half a dozen sowars with them, and started at about 3 a. m.

I also sent for Captain Nunn, the S.N.O., to inform him of events, and gave him a duplicate message to send in a launch down river to Melliss at once. He was to get his convoy under way at daylight, and start down river, leaving a gunboat to co-operate with fire against the enemy's flank. The message, taken by Lieutenant Wood, R.N.R., did not get through, Arabs opening fire on his launch and wounding two men.

The messages to Sir Charles Melliss were to the effect that I feared I had been overtaken by the enemy. He was to march back to my assistance, keeping well away from the river in order to make a turning manœuvre and attack the enemy pressing me. I felt fairly confident that *if* my messages got through, I should defeat the enemy by this manœuvre, or at

[5] These officers received the D.S.O.

least extricate my force. Melliss had ten miles to march back.

There were no further sounds in the night—no lights or fires, only a dead silence. I sent for G.O.C.'s brigades at 5 a. m. to explain verbally once more my intention of making a vigorous attack. This was to be a frontal attack combined with an envelopment of the enemy's left flank, in which the Cavalry Brigade would co-operate on the exterior flank, and charge on the first opportunity. I told them also of my expedited orders to recall Melliss.

When daylight came on 1st December I expected to see the Turks entrenching or entrenched close at hand, for they dig in as quickly as moles. I did not believe they would advance to give me the shock. But I was mistaken.

As soon as it got light enough to see, there was plenty of excitement for all of us. The Turks, whom we estimated at nothing under 12,000 men, were advancing in long lines in extended order and had reached close field-artillery range—say 2,500 yards. Their left wing, I saw, was executing an envelopment around us. I at once ordered the artillery to open rapid fire and ordered Delamain and Hamilton to attack according to orders, whilst I sent off three or four gallopers to the cavalry, instructing them to envelop that wing of the enemy which was closing in on me, and to charge it. I have never seen artillery shoot with the precision of the 10th Brigade, R.F.A., which opened a rapid fire. This was most deadly.

One saw the Turkish lines of men dissolve in a regular cloud of our shells. What a splendid gun is our 18-pounder field-gun!

Meanwhile, Delamain and Hamilton advanced with the infantry. Owing to my offensive move I saw the enveloping attack halt, hesitate,[6] and come to a wobbly sort of stand which looked like becoming a bolt if they were menaced.

The Cavalry Brigade rapidly and brilliantly carried out my orders. Their Horse Artillery battery—the famous S battery—came into action from a ridge against the flank of the enemy's attack, whilst the Brigade itself galloped to some rising and dominating ground, where they dismounted and started rifle fire. Very soon we saw the enemy's enveloping attack completely upset and running in great disorder. Everywhere they began to fall back—covering their retreat, however, with a very violent shell-fire which inflicted considerable damage on us. Many the shaves we of the Divisional Staff had, while standing near the guns. One or two drivers of one of the batteries were knocked out of their saddles by the shrapnel within a few yards of the place where I was standing. Common shell and shrapnel were exploding all about the place, I could see shells bursting over the long column of the divisional train and supply column, now in full retreat.

Seeing the enemy's enveloping attack in retreat and their other troops beginning to fall back, I seized

[6] Turkish officers who were present told me that their losses were terrible at this moment. Our artillery fire paralysed all movement.

the opportunity to break off the combat, sending orders to Delamain and Hamilton to retire in alternate echelons of brigades, though I was much tempted to order a general advance.

We were under a very severe shell fire; but I have never seen—even in peace manœuvres—a retirement carried out better, both as regards steadiness and suppleness in manœuvre than was executed by the Sixth Division at this critical moment. The sight of the brigades falling back steadily in echelon, with the precision of clockwork, and the gradual development into one steady flow of retreat in perfect order—guns, everything, in their proper places—filled me with pride. Shall I ever have such a command again, I thought?

What would have happened if I had not had those perfect Brigade Commanders? There is no doubt that the most severe selection should be exercised for promotion to Brigadier-General, but I have never understood why in the British Army we have always had a more strict selection in promoting Brigadier-Generals to Major-General. If a man is a good Brigadier-General he is a good divisional commander, for I have always declared, and shall continue to do so, that it is easier to command a division than a brigade, as you have more units with which to manœuvre. The same applies to the command of an army corps. It is easier to fight an independent battle, having an army corps of two divisions at your disposal, than to command a division only.

In the middle of issuing orders for the retreat, my

attention was drawn to one of the gunboats—the *Comet*—aground and in flames. She was an old wooden paddle-wheel river-steamer, fitted up with a few iron plates to cover the bridge and a few plates on the forecastle to shield the gun's crew from rifle bullets. It will be remembered that it was on board her that I had received the Turkish commander's surrender at Amarah.

The *Firefly* had also had a shell through her boiler, totally disabling her. I could see her funnel and fighting-top over the edge of the river bank some 2,000 yards up river. The enemy's guns were firing heavily on both boats, and there was no possibility of helping them, but the crews managed to get away in their boats. The *Firefly* was a serious loss. She was the first of the new river monitors and carried a 4.7 inch gun.[7]

It must have been about 7.30 a. m. when we began to retire. Although the enemy continued to shell at long range he only followed up with his cavalry for a short time. We lost some 500 men killed and wounded in this engagement. We had not lost a gun, or a prisoner. I had all the Turkish prisoners—about 1,500 of them—taken at Ctesiphon marching with the Divisional train and supply column.

About 9 a. m. General Melliss with the 30th Brigade met my column on the march. He had marched at daylight rapidly to my assistance and well inland from the river. I was glad to see him, although he was too late for the battle. The Arab horsemen

[7] She was recaptured at Baghdad in March, 1917.

must have reported his approach to the enemy and this, together with their losses, I expect caused the Turks to halt at Umm-al-Tubul.

In this battle I may have played too near the flame, but it was not my fault. That I was forced to fight was due to having to guard the ships, which, in these difficult bends and shallows, could move only by day. But, owing to the high quality of the troops, unshaken by the fierce fighting they had undergone in the battle of Ctesiphon, and—I repeat again— to my exceptional Brigade Commanders, I was able to extricate myself with ease from the grip of the pursuing columns. To break off a battle and retreat is the most difficult of all operations, even when you command fresh troops; but it is much more difficult when your troops are stale and war-worn, and have been subjected to very hard fighting—and the trial at Ctesiphon was no ordinary one in that direction. If your troops are disorganised, it is impossible to retreat methodically by a manœuvre such as I executed —a movement in echelons of brigades. The critical moment comes when you quit your positions, when your deployed formation must be changed into march formation. You must obtain some respite to be able to do this.

In order to obtain this respite I carried out a predetermined offensive movement. This menace has often been, and will often be, successful at such moments. It was in this way that MacMahon, at the moment he was beginning his retreat on 6th August, 1870, imposed on the Germans by an offensive move-

ment carried out by General Pelle's division against the village of Froeschwiller.

It was in the same way also that General Chanzy, on 11th December, 1870, managed to begin his famous retreat to the Loire. The Germans thought his manœuvre indicated an offensive return and never till midday rose to the fact that the forces of Chanzy were in full retreat.

In the conduct of rear guard fighting, artillery and cavalry are your principal arms; your infantry should act only as a support to the artillery, and should only be engaged in extremity or in the utmost necessity. Once the rear guard infantry permits pursuing infantry to approach within 1,000 yards, which was effective rifle range in such open and flat country as we were in, then it is pinned and cannot retire, which is the reason why such large numbers of prisoners are generally lost in retreats. Moreover, once pursuing infantry gets within 1,000 yards of your guns, the limbers cannot be brought up, if the ground is open.

I continued the march all day. I was determined not to halt till I reached Shadie, thirty-six miles away. The rearguard cavalry constantly exchanged shots with Arab horsemen, who hung on our rear flanks. I would not have a long halt, for it was absolutely necessary to put such a distance between us and the enemy as would enable me to rest the force for a night, and then move the next day into Kut itself. In the afternoon I constantly travelled up and down the column, talking to officers and men here

and there, to show all that I was quite cheery. The troops were very tired, but in good spirits.

Towards sunset, when the column was traversing the top of one of the many serpentine bends of the Tigris, one or two of the brigadiers asked me if I would not halt, since the troops were dead beat.[8] But I did not dare to, for, as I said, "Once these men get down to the river bank, we shall not collect them for hours. They will lie by the water, drink, and fall asleep like logs. I do not know that the Turks are not a few miles behind."

The Arab horsemen continued always to hang on to our rear. "Forward" was the word; and so we continued through the night. It must have been nine o'clock when the head of the column reached Shadie. We had marched thirty-six miles, including the battle in the morning, and I call that a record march. Melliss's brigade had gone about five miles more, since they had retraced their steps to assist me in the battle. The troops were utterly tired out. They lay down on the road in column and slept in the ranks as they were—and I had *no food* to distribute.

The ships were at Shadie, and I went on board the *Mejidieh,* and learnt that a barge, full of sick and wounded, shipped at Azizieh, had grounded a short distance from Umm-al-Tubul, and had been captured by the enemy, as they could not get the barge off, in

[8] There was a lot of falling out, the men being put on carts which I had ordered to march with the rearguard for this purpose. If anyone fell behind the rearguard his throat was at once cut by the Arabs.

spite of the greatest efforts. I heard details from the S.N.O. also about the *Firefly*. She had grounded on a mud-bank and, when trying to get her off, got a shell through her boiler. The *Comet* went to her assistance, but was hulled several times by shells—being set on fire in consequence and rendered unmanageable. Both were abandoned by Captain Nunn. An aviation store-barge and another of supplies with sick men, British and Indian soldiers unable to march, on board, were also lost on the shoals.

I ordered the march to be resumed at daylight on 2nd December. No enemy were in sight, as I watched the column move out, standing on the high banks of a water-cut, and having a good look round with binoculars. The troops seemed very tired and fagged after their thirty-six mile march, with no food! But I hoped they would warm up as the day progressed—they were naturally very stiff at first. The march was a very painful one, and towards midday the men fell out in scores. I had placed all the transport carts available at the tail of the main body, and some carts with the rearguard itself for this purpose. The Arab horsemen, as on the day before, hung on to the skirts of the column, our march being accompanied by a continuous dropping fire of musketry. I refused to make any halt during the morning—I did not dare to—for I was afraid the men would simply lie down where they stood and sleep like logs for hours.

At 1 p. m. I halted for two hours at a convenient bend of the river, sending on the divisional train and

supply column to Kut with Colonel Chitty, with orders to send out food to meet the column at the place I intended to halt at that night—Shumran bend, six miles west of Kut. The troops were heartened by the news of food being sent to meet them, and the march was continued.

The G.O.C. at Kut, Brigadier-General Rimington, R.E., rode out and met me at this halt, bringing me the following wires from the M.G.G.S.:—

"November 30th, 1915.

"Your suggestion to retire slowly on Kut approved. Army Commander very pleased to hear of successful charge of 14th Hussars and 7th Lancers on 29th.

"He is also very grateful for your ready assistance in sending Melliss's column to deal with situation on Lines of Communication pending return of General Headquarters and L.G.C. to Basra. Gorringe has been ordered there to organise despatch of reinforcements, for which it is essential that our shipping be got back to Basra earliest opportunity. Has Melliss got wireless with him?"

"December 1st, 1915.

"I congratulate you most sincerely on the splendid resistance you have made. Am deeply concerned and feel that the best way in which I can assist you is to clear away all shipping and wounded from here with escort, wing 66th, one double coy. Hants, 2 mountain guns, to break our way through at Orah. These will be left at Kut: Troop 14th Hussars,

wing 66th, one double coy. Hants and some 800 convalescents capable of using a rifle. Am leaving Kut this afternoon."

The G.O.C. Kut arrived at about the same time as his telegram. This said that he found it very difficult to "make an entrenched defensive position covering Kut which cannot be turned. Enemy will certainly surround us in a very confined camp and will hold us with a small force while he will occupy Essinn position against our reinforcements. Alternative would be to retire on Essinn.[9] There are about thirty mahelas here, on which, if you decide to evacuate Kut, we can place wounded and supplies."

I told General Rimington that I had determined to stand at Kut itself. Moreover, my force was too exhausted to move a yard further at the moment. It was an impossibility to move all the supplies and ammunition in time. Kut is a most important strategic point. To leave it would enable the enemy to despatch troops down to Nasiriyeh by utilising the Hai River for the transport of munitions and supplies. If he moved his whole force there, Basra would be menaced. It was not till this day that I heard that the towing launch had had to abandon a part of our bridge train between Umm-al-Tubul and Shadie. This was indeed a great loss.

The column reached Shumran at dusk on 2nd December, but the rearguard, under Hoghton, did

[9] The site of my battle in September, 1915, but on the opposite, the right, bank.

not arrive till much later, owing to the difficulty of getting along the stragglers. No man was left behind the rearguard, though perhaps in one or two cases a few Indian soldiers and followers may have lain down tired out under some bush to sleep, and so got left behind; but no case was ever reported to me. It is certain, however, that a few native followers did this and were cut up by the Arab horsemen. A German artillery Colonel at Aleppo, who had been with the Turkish advanced guard in these operations, told me he saw some bodies of Indians who had been killed by the Arabs; and in one case half a dozen dead English soldiers who had been stripped naked and their throats cut by the Arabs. These poor fellows were amongst the sick on the barge which ran aground and was captured. Some of the men managed to get ashore and made a run for it, trying to catch up the column on the march; and one or two actually joined us in this way.

Throughout my operations in Mesopotamia, I ever found the Arabs merciless and cowardly scoundrels. Witness their conduct after the battle of Kurna in the pursuit to Amarah, when Turkish soldiers were murdered on all sides. The Arab goes with whichever side he thinks is winning. The Turks know how to treat them, and give them short shrift.

We marched into Kut early next morning, 3rd December, the Turkish force reaching Shadie on the same day. On arrival I telegraphed to Sir John Nixon, who had left by ship for Basra (the cutting of the line of communications at Sheikh Saad appears

to have been the work only of some raiders, who disappeared after a few shots from a gunboat), saying that I had decided to make a stand at Kut and entrench, in order to hold up the Turkish counter-offensive at all costs, and also to enable him to concentrate the reinforcements arriving at Basra on the line Amarah-Ali Gharbi. I added that I had already issued orders for putting my plan of defence into action; I had a month's full rations for British troops, two months' for the Indian troops, and ample ammunition.

Thus was the retreat successfully accomplished. As I watched the exhausted troops dragging themselves by me—for it could hardly be called marching—past the line of blockhouses into Kut, I thought of what Jomini has said of retreats: "Courage and firmness in adversity is more honourable than enthusiasm in success; for courage only is required to attack and carry a position, whereas heroism is necessary to carry out a difficult retreat before an enterprising and exultant enemy, and by opposing to him a front of bronze without letting oneself be discouraged. It is the duty of a state to reward a good retreat equally with the most brilliant victory." "Honourable retreats," says Lord Bacon, "are no ways inferior to brave charges, as having less fortune, more of discipline, and as much of valour." "An honourable retreat," says Napier, in his "Peninsular War," speaking of Moore's retreat, "is that one in which the retiring general loses no trophies in

the fight, sustains every charge without being broken, and finally after a severe action re-embarks his army in the face of a superior enemy without being seriously molested."

To sum up the retreat from Ctesiphon to Kut: Mine was a retreat in the face of an overwhelming force of Turks, undertaken after a desperate battle at Ctesiphon, in which the losses had been over 33 per cent. of the total combatants engaged. The whole brunt of the loss was borne by the infantry. Therefore the casualties of 4,500 meant over half my fighting force; yet in no way was the discipline and good order of the Sixth Division affected. It was a retreat of ninety miles, with the advanced guard of the Turkish 6th Army on my heels. On 1st December I was forced to halt and to fight against my will, in order to save some ships and barges on the river. Yet not only was the attack repulsed, but it was driven headlong back by means of an offensive counter-stroke on the enemy's flank, which all experienced soldiers will recognise as sufficient testimony to the discipline and manœuvring powers of the troops in retreat. After repulsing the enemy I broke off the action—the hardest test of all in rearguard fighting—and continued the retirement in echelons of brigades, under as good conditions as in peace training. Not a single wounded man was left behind, though 500 were killed and wounded in that action; not a single gun was lost, and 1,500 Turkish prisoners marched with my column throughout. Never, I con-

sider, has a British force done longer or more exhausting marches than those of 1st and 2nd December.[10] Never in any war in modern military history have British troops been more highly tried than in the Ctesiphon operations. Yet never was there a murmur—never the slightest sign of demoralisation or insubordination. I hope that history will call this also an honourable retreat.

The reply of Sir John Nixon to my telegram announcing my decision to stand at Kut was as follows:—

"December 3rd, 1915.

"The Army Commander is glad to hear of your decision, and is convinced that your troops will continue to show the same spirit in the defence as they have shown throughout your operations. Reinforcements will be pushed up to you with every possible speed."

[10] Thirty-six and forty miles.

APPENDIX TO PART I

MEMORANDUM ISSUED BY ME TO ALL SENIOR OFFICERS

e.g.,

BRIGADE COMMANDERS, S.N.O., AND THEIR CHIEF STAFF OFFICERS

SECRET.

1. DISTRIBUTION OF THE DIVISION INTO NUMBERED GROUPS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FACILITATING AND SIMPLIFYING OPERATION ORDERS, MOVEMENTS, QUARTERING, HALTING, ETC.

ADVANCED GUARD GROUP. Brig-Genl. DOBBIE.

17th Infantry Brigade.

Oxfords.
103rd L. I.
22nd Punjabis.
119th Inf.
½ 22 Co. S. & M.
30th Mountain Battery.
1 Secn. Brit. Fd. Amb.
2 Secns. Ind. Fd. Amb.
1 Secn. No. 34 Div. Sig. Co.
The Ships allotted to this group fly Red flags.

No. 1 GROUP.

16th Infantry Brigade. Brig-Genl. DELAMAIN.

Dorsets.

104th Rifles.
117th Mahrattas.
1 Secn. Brit. Fd. Amb.
1 Secn. Ind. Fd. Amb.
½ No. 22 Co., S. & M.
The ships allotted to this Group fly GREEN flags.

No. 2 GROUP. (GENERAL RESERVE) at the disposal of the G.O.C. Division.

2 Norfolk Regt.
48 Pioneers.
The ships allotted to this Group fly YELLOW flags.

No. 3 GROUP. (ARTILLERY.) Brig.-Genl. SMITH.

Class 1. Land Artillery.
Class 2. Mobile Heavy Artillery on barges.
Class 3. Mobile Light Artillery.
The ships allotted to this group fly BLUE flags.

No. 4 GROUP.

Divisional Ammunition Column, including that for Heavy Artillery, etc.

Hospital ship.	Repairing boat.
Bridging material.	Engineer stores.

Flags: LEFT HALF BLUE, OTHER HALF WHITE.

No. 5 GROUP.

Divisional Supply Column—food supplies—are divided up amongst the Groups in their barges, so for the present No. 5 Group does not exist.

Flags: BLUE WITH WHITE BALL.

THE ATTACK ON THE TURKISH POSITION NORTH OF KURNA

2. A POSITION IN READINESS will be taken up by the force on the afternoon of the

The Advance Guard Group at Kurna on land.

No. 1 Group in Ships lying off Mazera in the Shatt-el-Arab.

No. 2 Group in Ships at the tail of No. I Group towards the mouth of the Suwaib.

No. 3 Group in Ships south of Kurna in the Euphrates and east of the Camp at Kurna in the Tigris along the quay at Kurna.

No. 4 Group at the tail of No. 2 Group.

3. THE S.N.O. will detail the stations of his flotilla and warships and will be requested to furnish a guard boat west of No. 3 Group in the Euphrates; and another guard boat at the tail of No. 4 Group; and he will order the mine-sweepers to be in readiness and will indicate the hour at which the bridge of boats, net, and boom are to be broken. Order will be issued by 6th Division Staff accordingly.

4. G.O.C. AND HEAD-QUARTERS DIVISION on board H.M.S. Espiegle, the Flag Ship.

5. MISSION OF G.O.C.

My mission is not only to drive the enemy from his present position between the Pear Drop Bend and Kurna, but also to pursue him and occupy Amarah.

6. GENERAL INTENTION OF G.O.C. *Here followed practically the same memorandum as in my plan of operations submitted to Sir John Nixon.*

The following remarks were made on my plan of operation by the Commander of Expeditionary Force "D":—

39/57/0
19/5/15

G.O.C.,

6th Division.

With reference to your Secret Memorandum *re* KURNA.

Please read the accompanying by the A.C., to which he wishes me to add the following observations.

1. The success of the operations with which you are entrusted will depend greatly on the Staff work, and especially on the clearness and completeness of the Operation Orders.

The A.C. desires that these orders may be framed with great care, and that the instructions contained in the Field Service Regulations be closely followed. Any memoranda issued in addition to Operation Orders are to be as few and terse as possible.

2. Orders regulating the action of the Artillery should be very clearly worded, as there is some ambiguity in paras. 8 and 9 of your Memorandum, and the *rôle* of the Mountain Battery is not mentioned. In this matter please take the fullest advantage of Brigadier-General Smith, who is placed at your disposal for the purpose.

3. Another point to be noted is that it is most important that from the outset THERE SHOULD BE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE S.N.O. AS TO THE *rôle* OF THE R.N., AND I AM TO SUGGEST THAT YOU SHOULD ACQUAINT THE S.N.O. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WITH YOUR WISHES AND ASK HIM TO DRAFT THEREON THE NECESSARY PARAS. *re* MINE SWEEPING,[1] SUPPORT BY GUN FIRE, ETC., ETC., FOR INSERTION IN OPERATION ORDERS, SO THAT THERE MAY BE NO ROOM FOR ANY MISAPPREHENSION.

4. The A.C. agrees with your view as to the impracticability of landing heavy artillery on the localities named

[1] It was simply notified in Operation Orders that the O.C. Mine Sweeping craft had received full instructions from the S.N.O., otherwise the length of the operation orders would have been needlessly bulky and great.

in paras. 12 and 15 of your Memorandum and thinks it would be wise to abandon the idea at once.

5. As regards the movement of your Turning Attack:—The A.C. sees little prospect of providing any diversion on the Eastern flank such as that arranged on the Western flank *viâ* the EL HUIR Creek.

Possibly this may lead you to modify your intention as stated in para. 8, that the turning attack which has ONE TREE HILL as its first objective is to move at a distance of some 5,000 yards from the river.

Such a movement, even though protected by a flank guard, would be liable to afford an enemy in the rushes bordering the SUWAIB an opportunity of harassing and possibly delaying that advance, since Arabs hidden in the reeds are somewhat difficult to deal with.

6. As regards para. 9, there are certainly arguments in favour of delaying the attack of the 17th Brigade until the Turning Attack is closing on ONE TREE HILL, but I am to ask you to consider that the latter attack will take a considerable time to reach such a locality, and that it will be at some distance from any support, in a somewhat isolated position, and further, that the Mine Sweeping cannot well proceed past NORFOLK HILL, until that position has been cleared of the enemy's riflemen by an advance from the neighbourhood of FORT SNIPE.

7. With regard to the proposed use of 18-pr. guns on rafts, as contemplated in para. 8 of your Memorandum. Such information as is available at General Head-Quarters rather points to the fact that the water is too shallow for the manœuvre in question.

It would be as well to verify its possibility, as there appears to be some chance of the rafts stranding.

8. The Operation Orders, which the A.C. wishes to see now, need only deal with the first phase of the operations; but there is no need to exclude from that phase operations

for the capture of BAHRAN, should the course of events render this objective attainable on the first day.

It is recognised, however, that the precise orders for such an attack cannot be included in Operation Orders, but will have to be issued by you in the field.

9. As regards para. 23: The removal of the obstruction is a Military Operation, but I am to inform you that the S.N.O., who was consulted on the subject some time ago, expressed his readiness to give every assistance in his power.

(Signed) E. V. KEMBALL,

19/5/15. *M.G.G.S.*

M.G.G.S.

I don't think Genl. Townshend should issue the lengthy "intentions" in para. 6.[2]

It is contrary to practice and concerns nobody but himself.

There are several points I have discussed with you, which please bring to his notice.

In his general remarks, General Townshend says he will issue Operation Orders and separate Memoranda the day before the operation. To enable me to form an opinion, please ask him to reduce them to writing now that I may see them, and to let me have them as soon as he can.

(Signed) JOHN NIXON,

19/5/15. *Genl.*

OPERATION ORDERS FOR THE BATTLE OF KURNA

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 16

28th May, 1915.

Reference map of Kurna 1-in. to 1 mile.

[2] The Memorandum was to explain fully to Sir John what my idea was in attacking, and had nothing to do with operation orders.

GENERAL SITUATION.

1. (*a*) No pronounced change in the enemy's dispositions in his positions astride of the TIGRIS north of KURNA.

His main positions are chiefly the localities of BAHRAN; ROTAH; MAZIBLAH; SAKRICHA: advanced posts of the ROTAH position on the sand hills and to the BAHRAN position at NORFOLK HILL; ONE TREE HILL; ONE TOWER HILL; GUN HILL.

(*b*) The advanced posts, ONE TOWER HILL; GUN HILL; ONE TREE HILL, are supported at under 5,000 yards range from BAHRAN (ONE TREE HILL at under 6,000 yards).

The BAHRAN position is supported by artillery fire from ROTAH and MAZIBLAH; and SAKRICHA is at 4,500 yards from MAZIBLAH.

(*c*) It is probable that mines are placed in the TIGRIS channel north of the boom at FORT SNIPE.

(*d*) According to our intelligence reports, the Turkish force comprises some 5 battalions, 10 guns and about 600 Mujahidin, the MARMARICE river steamer, and some 1,200 Arab riflemen with one of the guns mentioned above in the marshes on the West flank of NORFOLK HILL AND GUN HILL, possibly to counter-attack our infantry advance along the West side of the TIGRIS.

The position of the guns are as follows:—

1 gun at RUMLA (in marshes to W.).
2 guns on GUN HILL.
1 gun on ONE TOWER HILL.
1 gun at BAHRAN (at Eastern Tower).
1 gun at ROTAH.
4 guns newly arrived and not yet located, but thought to be:—

1 at ROTAH.
3 at BAHRAN.

(2) The flooded state of the country renders the above a position of strength, and demands an operation method-

ically undertaken in successive phases as in siege warfare, every effort being made to obtain concentric fire action by the forces on the West side of the TIGRIS, the Naval Flotilla and the force on the East side of the river.

GENERAL INTENTION OF G.O.C.

2. The enemy will be attacked on May 31st by combined Frontal and Turning Attacks.

(*a*) Frontal attack. A frontal decisive attack, supported by the Artillery and the Naval Flotilla, will move against the enemy's position on the West side of the TIGRIS, assisted by a Turning attack on the East side of the TIGRIS.

(*b*) DEMONSTRATIONS on EAST and WEST.

In order to engage the attention of the Arabs on both flanks of the Turkish positions, demonstrations up the SUWAIB and EL HUIR Creeks by friendly Arabs, supported by gunboats, are being arranged by Army Head-Quarters.

3. DISTRIBUTION OF TROOPS FOR THE 1st PHASE.

(*a*) ADVANCED GUARD GROUP.

FRONTAL ATTACK.	17th Infantry Brigade (less 22nd Punjabis), with Brigade Sig. Secn.
Lt.-Col. CLIMO, D.S.O.	½ Sirmur Sappers and Miners.
	30th Mountain Battery (less 1 Secn.).
	1 Secn. Brit. Field Ambulance.
RED FLAGS.	1 Secn. Ind. Field Ambulance.
TURNING ATTACK.	(*b*) 22nd Punjabis.
	1 Secn. 30th Mountain Battery.
Lt.-Col. BLOIS JOHNSON.	½ Co. Sirmur S. & M.
RED FLAGS.	1 Secn. Ind. Field Ambulance.

C.R.A. (*c*) No. 3 GROUP. ARTILLERY.
BLUE FLAGS. Land Section.
River Section.
½ No. 22 Co., S. & M.
Bridging Train.

No. 1 GROUP. (*d*) 16th Infantry Brigade, consisting of:—
G.O.C. 16th BRIGADE.
GREEN FLAGS. 2nd Dorsets.
104th Rifles.
48th Pioneers.
Brigade Sig. Secn.
63rd Battery, R.F.A.
½ No. 22 Co., S. & M.
1 Secn. Brit. and 2 Secns. Ind. Fd. Amb.
All in ships.

GENERAL RESERVE. Lt.-Col. PEEBLES, D.S.O.
(*e*) 2nd Norfolk Regt.
1 Secn. Brit. F.A.
1 Secn. Ind. F.A.
} on ships.

4. ORDERS FOR THE ATTACK, FIRST PHASE.

OBJECTIVE, the line of the BIRBECK CREEK.

(*a*) At 5 a.m. on May 31st the Artillery (Land Section) will commence a bombardment of the enemy's position, their fire being distributed on:—

NORFOLK HILL,
ONE TREE HILL,
ONE TOWER HILL,
GUN HILL,

in accordance with the detailed instructions issued by the C.R.A. The Naval Flotilla will co-operate against NORFOLK HILL and GUN HILL.

The River Section will be in readiness to move up when ordered from their *rendezvous* positions at KURNA. The tugs are allotted for this purpose.

(*b*) The FRONTAL ATTACK will advance from its position of assembly WEST of FORT SNIPE at 6 a.m. Objectives:—

NORFOLK HILL,
ONE TOWER HILL,
and
GUN HILL.

The O.C. will ensure the protection of his left flank during this advance.

(*c*) The TURNING ATTACK will start from its *rendezvous* at 1 a.m. Objective:—ONE TREE HILL. The O.C. will time his movement so as to conform with the artillery bombardment.

(*d*) The O.C. TURNING ATTACK will detail a party to look for and explode by rifle fire all mines found along the river bank.

(*e*) Mine-sweeping operations by the Naval Flotilla will be conducted under orders of the S.N.O. during the Artillery bombardment.

The subsequent forward movement of the Warships and River Section barges will be regulated by the progress of the mine-sweepers.

5. No. 1 (16th Bde.) GROUP and No. 2 (General Reserve) GROUP in transports will be brought up the TIGRIS when ordered as follows:—

MEJIDIEH,
BLOSSE LYNCH.
P1.
P3.

6. The Ordnance barge, Hospital Ship and R.E. Park (GROUP 4), and the Divisional Supply Column (GROUP 5), will remain at KURNA till ordered up.

MEDICAL—

7. The Dressing Station of the force will be on NORFOLK HILL. This will be provided by the Field Ambulance attached to the General Reserve.

REPORTS—

8. Reports to Divisional Head-Quarters on board H.M.S. ESPIEGLE from 6 p.m. on May 30th.

(Signed) R. N. GAMBLE, *Colonel,*

Issued at 8 p.m. *General Staff.*[3]

[3] I had to leave the 117th Infantry, which belonged to the 16th Infantry Brigade, in garrison at Kurna. This was the minimum force I could leave, for it was possible that a serious counter-attack by the marsh Arabs might be made on Kurna as soon as the Turkish Commander saw us advancing against his position.

APPENDIX TO PART II

PROJECT OF OPERATIONS FOR THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA

To M.G.G.S., General Headquarters, Basra, 28th August, 1915.

With reference to instructions for my advance on Kut-al-Amara, dated G.H.Q., I.E.F., "D," Basra, 23rd August, 1915, para. 5, sub-para. A, and the Intelligence Report also, given me by General Headquarters, I have the honour to submit the following project of operations for carrying out my mission:

(1) As soon as I have occupied Sheikh Saad with the 17th Infantry Brigade, which would go straight through from Amarah, I should at once unite the 16th Inf. Brigade, now at Ali-al-Gharbi, with it, and should unite the 18th Inf. Brigade from Amarah with the above and the remainder of the Division.

(2) I should not advance from Sheikh Saad on Kut-al-Amara until my force is entirely united at Sheikh Saad.

(3) Unless any important information be received, either by Intelligence reports or aerial reconnaissance, necessitating an alteration of my project of operations, I should march the whole of my force united on the left bank of the Tigris from Sheikh Saad in about three easy marches to Kut-al-Amara; owing to the great heat marching from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m., and resting all day. The march would be in a single column and consist of the cavalry, infantry and Divisional troops, less the heavy batteries and 5th Hants Howitzer battery by ship transport.

The halt and bivouac for the force would be alongside

the ships and gunboat flotilla, which would ensure the security of the bivouac as far as the river was concerned.

PRECONCEIVED MANŒUVRE.

(4) As the enemy divided their forces, according to all reports, with an impassable river between them, having their left wing on the left bank and their right wing on the right bank, I shall destroy their left wing by means of my whole force united, ignoring their force on the right bank, which will inevitably fly when it sees its left wing rolled up. I select the left wing of the enemy for destruction as that flank is nearest the enemy's line of retreat. (See rough sketch attached which shows the manœuvre I have in my mind, i.e., a Turning attack by my Principal Mass, which will deliver a decisive attack against the enemy's left flank and rear.) [1] A battery of field artillery will accompany this attack, and also the cavalry, echelonned on the exterior flank.

(5) The Preparatory Attack will comprise one infantry brigade moving along the left bank on a front of some 1,000 yards, supported by the whole of the divisional artillery—the 4-inch and 5-inch guns being disembarked from the barges and installed on the left bank. (The banks are now high up above the river.)

(6) The preparatory attack will not be made a decisive one until it is seen that the Turning or Decisive attack is closing on the river.[2] I should have a distance of roughly three miles between the decisive and preparatory attacks, i.e., effective field artillery range.

(7) As I have said, the above project is the principle I have in my mind to apply, which I shall carry out unless some weighty reason or obstacle appears to alter or modify it.

[1] This is exactly what happened in the battle.

[2] It would have been more clear had I said *moving down* on the river, i.e., when it was rolling up the enemy's left flank and driving all before it.

I believe the reason why the enemy have made their right flank so strong is that they fear a strategic turning movement from Nasiriyeh, and that in consequence I shall come by the right bank; or else they believe the British are wedded to frontal attacks, since they have seen hardly anything else in the campaign.

All the reports say that the left bank is perfectly open, favourable for manœuvre, no obstacles, but I shall thoroughly test these reports.

(8) I was informed to-day, on my arrival at Amarah from Basra, that no P-class steamer can go more than 15 miles beyond Ali-al-Gharbi—this, on the authority of Mr. Cowley. This is a serious thing, in view of one of the Lynch steamers being required to be held in readiness at Basra for the Karun river if necessity arise. I felt bound to wire you this, as Mr. Cowley knows his river.

(9) With regard to sub-para. (b) of para. 5: the aircraft commander will be in close touch with me and my plan of operations. His closest attention will be invited to reconnoitring the enemy's left flank and rear, in view of my preconceived manœuvre indicated above. Section 95 F.S. Regulation Part I, paras. 2, 3, 4, will be kept in mind. Paras. 6, 7, 3 [3] are noted; I will write you separately on the subject of defensive posts on my line of communications. I shall cut down the numbers of one post already proposed at Ali-al-Gharbi. I find that the garrison of a small post on the Line of Communication is put down as one battalion—a half company is more what I want. I will write further on this subject.

(10) Intelligence news was given me to-day, on my arrival here, in which it is indicated that 12 battalions of Turkish troops have arrived at Mosul "from the Van districts and from the S.W. of Erzeroum," and are about to be despatched on skin rafts (Killiks) to Baghdad. The letter is dated 27 Ramazan.

[3] Of general instructions to me by M.G.G.S.

If this is true they should be at Baghdad by now. Needless for me to remark to you how unlikely it is that Turkish troops in the zone in which they are fighting the Russians, where the Ottoman troops have just suffered a defeat, should be diverted to Mesopotamia. Still one does not know what the Turks will do or not do, and it may be taken for certain that Nureddin is making frantic appeals for help to hold Baghdad. What do you think of this? If another 6,000 combatants are added to 6,000 already in position at Sinn position, I should have to attack markedly superior numbers in a strong position.

C. V. F. Townshend,
Major-General.

Amarah.
28th August, 1915.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE PROJECT

It may possibly be of interest to my military readers to explain my tactics in detail.

It will be seen, on reference to the Introduction of this book, that my plan of battle was the application of the principle of the Mass against the enemy's weakest point. At the same time my minimum force is used to pin the adversary in front, whilst liberty of action and manœuvre enables my Principal Mass to be moved on to the enemy's left flank and rear, where it will fall on the enemy and automatically roll up the left wing of the enemy. The enemy's right wing on the right bank of the river would not stay when they saw their left wing destroyed. In accordance with this predetermined plan, I grouped my force into:—

A. The Principal Mass—Brigadier-General Delamain.
B. Minimum Force—Major-General Fry.

The Principal Mass, or "A" Column, comprised the 16th

and 17th Infantry Brigades, a proportion of mobile artillery, including the howitzer battery (for clearing trenches of the enemy), and the bulk of the cavalry, which would operate on principle always on the exterior flank of the Principal Mass. This would be used as a hammer blow against the enemy's weakest point—that flank of the hostile force which lay nearest its natural line of retreat. This was the road from Kut to Baghdad, which ran along the left bank of the Tigris, and therefore I knew I should find the bulk of the hostile force on that bank. Thus it was indicated that I should operate on the left bank, for the first of the fundamental principles of war is that our primary objective should always be the bulk of the hostile forces in the field. In order to use my Principal Mass in a turning movement against the enemy's flank, my manœuvre would be a predetermined one. All the land transport available I therefore allotted to "A" Column, which would have to make a wide sweeping turning manœuvre into the desert in order to gain the extreme flank and rear of Nureddin's entrenched position at Essinn. By far the greater portion of his redoubts and entrenchments was on the left bank; and, as the *rôle* of the turning, or principal attack was the most important, I put my best brigadier in command of "A" Column.

The Minimum Force, or "B" Column, for which I had no land transport to speak of, and which therefore would always be transported in ships, until it should arrive within striking distance of the enemy, comprised the 18th Infantry Brigade under Major-General Fry, together with the bulk of the artillery and all the heavy artillery, and the bulk of the engineers and sappers and miners, so as to give the Minimum Force great defensive power. This force I should use to attack the enemy's position frontally, in order to pin him to his ground and hold him in his entrenchments whilst my Principal Mass executed a wide turning manœuvre into

the desert and would be drawn round on to the enemy's rear and extreme flank—as one hauls in a fishing net.

The Minimum Force would proceed along the river bank and start the battle by delivering the frontal attack against that wing of the enemy which rested on the river in its entrenchments. But it would not make its attack a decisive one, until I ordered it, which would be when the Principal Mass became closely engaged. Until that moment, the action of the Minimum Force would be characterised by a defensive character, with powerful artillery and a plentiful supply of picks and spades and entrenching tools. All natural obstacles of the terrain, such as water-courses and nullahs, irrigation channels, etc., would be taken advantage of, and all captured localities utilised as defences. It was probable also, I thought, that Nureddin would not expect a wide turning manœuvre round his flank and rear, as up to this time the Turks had invariably experienced purely frontal attacks by the British. This surmise proved correct; Nureddin expected the usual attack frontally along both banks of the river.

After the battle had been well commenced by the Minimum Force, the Principal Mass or Turning Attack, Column "A," would be drawing near the enemy's flank and rear, with the bulk of the cavalry working on the exterior flank of the attack and menacing the line of retreat of the enemy. And the shock of the Principal Mass in the battle would be the signal for every one in the whole force to advance and engage on the whole battle front.

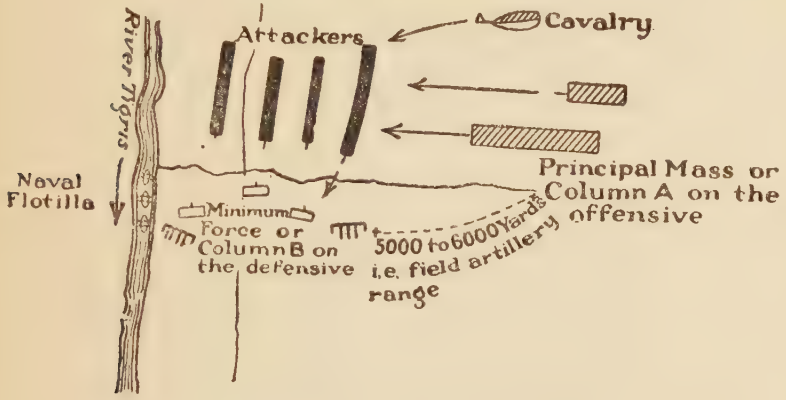
The Naval Flotilla on the river would assist with its action the progress of the Minimum Force and deal with any hostile artillery on the right bank. I considered that I was certain to find that Nureddin would have detached a fraction of his forces to the right bank. This I should keep in check, and at the same time protect my transports and shipping, by a detachment borrowed from Gorringe's 12th

Division, which now were used as line of communication troops. I managed to get two weak battalions of these troops, under Colonel Climo, out of Army Headquarters for this purpose. The action of this detachment I decided should be the "passive defensive," entrenched on the right bank on the water's edge, and connected with the remainder of my force by a boat-bridge across the river.

Secret.

Headquarters, 6th Division,
September 22nd, 1915.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C.'S BRIGADES, HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS, S.N.O., ETC.


River Nyns
Attackers
Cavalry
Naval Flotilla
Principal Mass or Column A on the offensive
Minimum Force or Column B on the defensive
5000 to 6000 Yards i.e. field artillery range

The general principles of Sections 102, 103, Field Service Regulations Part 1, 1099 (reprint 1914) are embodied in my plan or, rather, project of attack. The Units for which I am waiting:—

The whole of the 63rd Battery R.F.A., and Hants Howitzer Battery, will have arrived by the 25th, and also the 16th Cavalry.

1.—Advance.

On the 26th the advance to the battle-field will be carried out as follows:—

16th Infantry Brigade.
17th Infantry Brigade.
30th Infantry Brigade (less 2 Battalions).
2 Batteries R.F.A. (10th Bde. R.F.A. less 1 Battery).
1 Maxim Battery.
Divl. Ammtn. Col. (land Section).
2 Secns. Brit. Field Amb.
6 Secns. Ind. Field Amb.
1/5th Hants Howitzer (less ½ Battery).
7th Lancers.
16th Cavalry.
No. 22 Co. S. & M.

"A" Column under General Delamain will march at 4.30 p.m. and move on the Chahela Bend, via the right bank, covered by its tactical advanced guard and by protective cavalry, which will install itself at the Mounds in the Chahela Bend—the column bivouacking (with ½ F.S. Scale of Tents) opposite the village of Nakhailat—the attendant ships banking into the right bank.

18th Infantry Brigade.
17th Co. S. & M.
Divisional Artillery.
Divisional Ammunition Col. (River Section).
Secn. Brit. & 2 Ind. F.A.

"B" Column, under General Fry, on ships (except 63rd Battery R.F.A., half of 1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery and 48th Pioneers, who go by the left bank) will move to Nakhailat and disembark on the left bank south of village, vessels banking into the left bank.

2.—Deployment for Action.

"B" Column will then advance towards the enemy along the left bank in order to install itself within the following

distances of the enemy's troops, entrenched on the left bank:—

(1) For 4.5 inch guns....	5,000 yds.	All guns on left bank of the river to support "B" Column —it is my intention to install them in position in—
(2) " 2.4 inch guns....	4,500 "	
(3) " 1 Battery R.F.A. (Howitzer Battery).	3,500 "	(3) Square E 5. 9. 9.
		(2) " F 5. 2. 7.
		(1) " F 5. 3. 5.

From these positions the guns will be able to support the infantry attack of the Preparatory Attack, "B" Column, without changing position at effective ranges.

The Naval Flotilla guns to support also the attack of "B" Column by covering fire directed to subdue that of any Turkish guns which may be entrenched south of the Tigris.

The advance of "B" Column will be in the open, over ground exposed to the fire of probably the whole of the Turkish artillery firing at known ranges. It would be an expensive advance if carried out in daylight. Therefore a night advance is indicated (night of 26th/27th) and trenches must be dug in the darkness.

The advance of "B" Column in its initial stages may have to be assisted by field guns of "A" Column, entrenched on Chahela Mounds, and the heavy guns moored in the Nakhailat Reach.

In the meanwhile the Boat Bridge is being constructed with the utmost rapidity and G.O.C. "A" Column will demonstrate [4] with a mixed detachment towards the Essinn entrenchments on the right bank and will select and establish entrenched posts covering the bridge and ships, leaving as

[4] I hoped by this demonstration to make my adversary believe I was going to divide my forces, and attack on both banks. The trick succeeded.

garrison the 30th demi-brigade, which utimately becomes a general reserve at the disposal of the G.O.C. the Force. Six Nordenfelt guns will be allotted to these posts.

It is believed that the bridge will be ready by the night of the 26th, and as soon as it is ready the crossing of "A" Column to the left bank will commence. They will leave their tents standing on the right bank and the operation will be covered by the mixed detachment and guns on Chahela Mounds.

Having crossed, "A" Column will rest east of Nakhailat village till dusk. I should have mentioned above that a mixed detachment (1 battn., 1 section, R.F.A.; troop of cavalry) from "A" Column will march by the left bank as a flank guard to "B" Column in ships, and, on arrival at Nakhailat, this detachment will march north to Square F 4 [5] to entrench itself and so hold the mouth of the defile between the Suwada and Suwechi marshes and act as advanced guard to "A" Column.

"A" Column will make a night advance to Square F 4. 1. 2. to the mouth of the defile.[5]

3.—Preparatory Attack.

On the 27th, at daybreak, the action will be seriously begun by "B" Column, under General Fry, whose object is a deliberate advance on the enemy's position on the left bank, Squares 6D and 5D, assisted and pushed by artillery support and the spade and entrenching tool. His *rôle* is not only to pin the enemy in his position and hold him, but, by display and ruse and large extension of front (1,200 yards for example) to endeavour to make him believe that this is the Principal Decisive Attack and so induce the enemy to use up Reserves to defend this section of the line.

[5] This defile is the avenue of approach between the Suwada and Ataba marshes.

General Fry will strengthen with the spade all localities won, and will utilise all dry water-courses, cuts in the terrain, etc., natural and artificial, with all the art of the engineer. His command and *rôle* is quite an independent one, and the conduct of the Preparatory Attack demands coolness and self-sacrifice.

As soon as he learns that the Principal Decisive Attack, "A" Column, has taken the hostile entrenchments holding the defile Square 3D and 3E, by the collar, General Fry will change his Preparatory Attack into a DECISIVE one.

4.—PRINCIPAL DECISIVE ATTACK.

"A" Column, under General Delamain, will move forward to the attack an hour or so after the Preparatory Attack has commenced, with the object of enveloping and carrying the hostile entrenchments 3D and 3E by assault. His attack is the embodiment of the principle of the Mass—striking the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers, his troops to be echelonned out on the exterior flank with the above intention and the bulk of his cavalry moving on his extreme exterior flank.

Having carried the entrenchments, General Delamain will advance rapidly south against the enemy's left flank and rear, hitting off the river at Squares 5 B. and 5 C.

It is thought that the enemy's right wing on the right bank will no longer stay when it is seen that their left wing on the left bank is retreating, which they must do precipitately when they see the turning attack descending on them.

General Delamain's attack should be as unexpected as possible under the conditions of this absolutely flat desert country devoid of cover. I have given him the greatest possible strength. I have no other mobile guns to give him, only two batteries. The remainder must be relegated to the Preparatory Attack (Minimum Force) which on principle must be given the bulk of the Artillery.

AIR SERVICE

This will work under the direct orders of Divisional Head-Quarters, and special instructions will be issued to the Flight Commander regarding:—

(*a*) Reconnaissance.
(*b*) Observation of artillery fire.
(*c*) Use of bombs in rear of the enemy.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS No. 2

IN THE CASE OF VICTORY AND PURSUIT

Secret.

1. "In the pursuit all manœuvres are good," said Marshall Saxe. The pursuit will be continued by day and night without regard to the exhaustion of men or horses, as long as the enemy's forces remain in the field.

"All pursuing troops must act with the greatest boldness and be prepared to accept risks which would not be justifiable at other times." (F.S. Regns., Part I., Secn. 112.) [6]

2. We shall have to carry out a Tactical Pursuit, i.e., a simple following-up in the flotilla and sending of cavalry and machine-guns by a rapid march by the Baghdad road, parallel with the enemy's line of retreat along the river and on the river, in order to forestall him at defiles, and to put him between two fires and surround him if possible.

In this pursuit, the Naval flotilla has largely to take the *rôle* of the cavalry, and in the same way infantry has to support it. The infantry, being conveyed in ships, will be able to turn the enemy's rearguard troops out of the defended localities whence the gunboats and cavalry are unable to dislodge them.

[6] I sometimes quoted the F.S. Regulations, for the latest editions had not reached all the troops in India when war broke out, though the Staff had received the book.

A Strategic Pursuit, which is directed across the retreating enemy's line of communications, taking a wide sweep, is not possible owing to conditions of this expedition, in which we are practically tied to our ships.

3. To menace the enemy's line of retreat will give him the greatest anxiety, for his only safety is in retreat; thus the pursuer must constantly endeavour to gain the flank of the retreating columns, or at least of their rearguard.

The enemy must be kept on the run. He should be shelled at night, so as to cause panic and confusion in his ranks. Even the opening of fire at random with artillery in the night in the direction of the localities where you think the pursued are trying to snatch some rest causes demoralisation, and, perhaps, panic and a disorderly flight.

The cavalry and machine-guns must abandon all frontal pursuit to the other arms, and must strain every nerve in a pursuit parallel with the line of retreat of the enemy, i.e., along the road to Baghdad (on the left bank), which is shorter than the river and cuts off many loops and bends. They must endeavour to forestall the fleeing enemy at defiles, etc.

The Flotilla gunboats and Column "B" will follow in direct pursuit, whilst the cavalry pursues laterally as stated above, endeavouring to head them off, always acting against the enemy's flank.

4. DISTRIBUTION OF PURSUING COLUMN IN SHIPS ("B" COLUMN).

G.O.C. Division accompanies "B" Column with

A.D.C.
G.S.O. I.
G.S.O. II.
G.S.O. III.
A.Q.M.G.
B.G.H.A.

The remainder Divisional Staff are then attached to General Delamain.

"B" COLUMN IN SHIPS

Julnar.
24. 7.
One battalion—less horses and M.G. mules.
½ Company Sappers and Miners.
One Section Indian Field Ambulance.
Two guns ready for rapid disembarkation, horses, with all possible wagons.
24. Battery vehicles. 7. ½ Battery horses.

Blosse Lynch.
6. Oil.
Two guns in action in bows—224 rounds per gun.
18th Brigade Headquarters.
One battalion—12 machine-gun mules.
One Section British Field Ambulance.
6. ½ Battery horses. Oil.

Mejidieh.
32. 22.
Two guns in action in bows—224 rounds per gun.
Divisional Headquarters (less part staff) and one Infantry battalion.
22. G.O.C.'s horses, plus M.G. mules on *Julnar*, *Mejidieh*, and *Mosul*.
32. 1½ Double Companies Infantry.

Mosul.
28. 29.
2½ Double Companies Infantry.
One Section Indian Field Ambulance.
29. R.E. stores and explosives.
28. R.E. stores and 18-pr. ammunition.

Horses Infantry Battalion limited to three per Regt.

5. General Delamain with Column "A" will follow with his ships by route march on the left bank.

I shall leave the 30th demi-brigade in occupation of Kut-al-Amara in the enemy's position on left bank.

Attached to Column "A."

Divisional Artillery (less 1 Field Battery).
Divisional Ammunition Column.
Air Service (Military and Naval).

Divisional Supply Column.
Field Ambulance.
Engineer Park.

The Air Service will work Column "A," coming forward to help the pursuing column, i.e., Column "B."

6. The Column of pursuit, i.e., Column "B," will be organised from the moment that the G.O.C. has no more doubt that the enemy are retreating.

As soon as the Column of Pursuit is ready, it will be embarked in the ships allotted as above, and the O.C. Cavalry will be given his instructions and transports, his line of action in pursuit being based on the lateral pursuit by the Baghdad road. He must keep in communication as long as possible with the ships of the Pursuing Column. His command of necessity will be largely an independent one, but his aim should be to co-operate with the Pursuing Column in the ships.

The O.C. Cavalry will be prepared to send on a contact squadron far afield—say 30 to 40 miles—in order to carry out some special task should the G.O.C. Division order it. The G.O.C. Division will indicate to the O.C. Column "A" the successive points he reaches in the pursuit.

He will make known the points where prisoners are to be sent.

7. Scant mercy should be shown to enemy who refuse to lay down their arms, and the Arabs, if hostile, must be terrorised into giving information and bringing in supplies should the troops require it.

C. V. F. Townshend,
Major-General,
Commanding 6th Indian Division.

Issued at 8 a.m.

APPENDIX TO PART III

OPERATION ORDERS FOR ADVANCE TO ZEUR

6th DIVISION ORDERS

No. 55

1. Information *re* the enemy has been imparted to G.O.C. brigades and heads of departments.

2. The Division and troops attached will continue its offensive movement to-morrow, moving on ZEUR, marching at 9.30 a.m.

3. The Division will advance in 3 parallel columns as follows:—

On Left Bank. B. COLUMN (directing) by the Baghdad road, on the left.

A. COLUMN on the right of B. (north).

On Right Bank. C. COLUMN moving independently.

STARTING POINTS. Column B. Yellow Flag at the junction of the Baghdad and El Kutunie roads.

Column A. Red Flag, due north of S.P. of Column B.

4. THE DIVISIONAL TROOPS will follow the tail of B. Column, the Divisional Artillery (less heavy batteries) and 17 Company Sappers and Miners will follow the leading battalion of Column B.

THE FIELD AMBULANCE will follow the tail of the Divisional Troops.

5. A GENERAL ADVANCED GUARD [1] for columns B. and

[1] G.S.O., I., had to inform G.O.C. B. Column that I desired 3,500 yards distance—effective field artillery range—between the tail of this advanced guard and the head of Column B.

A. will be furnished by Column B.; consisting of 2 battalions, 1 Section R.F.A. and the Divisional Cavalry Squadron.

6. A Right Flank Guard to be thrown out by G.O.C., A. Column.

7. Cavalry Brigade has received instructions to move from El Kutunie, moving round the north side of the Marsh in Squares H2 and 3, and thence moving down on to the northern extremity of the Zeur entrenchments in co-operation with Column A., will menace the line of retreat of the enemy from Zeur on to Ctesiphon.

8. Column C., commanded by Brigadier-General Hoghton, will move by the right bank of the river, from El Kutunie, marching at 7.30 a.m., with general instructions to sweep the right bank of the hostile Arabs, and, taking the entrenchments shown on map in the north end of the river loop opposite the Zeur position, if found to be held, will enfilade the enemy holding the Zeur entrenchments with rifle and machine-gun fire.

9. The Naval Flotilla and 4.7 guns [2] in Horse Boats will co-operate with Column C., accompanying that column to assist its progress with artillery fire.[3]

10. Divisional Ammunition Column [4] will follow Column B. at tail of Field Ambulance. G.O.C. Column B. is responsible for the security of Divisional Ammunition Column.

11. Divisional Headquarters will march at head of Column B.

12. The Divisional Train and Supply Column [5] will follow at the tail of the Divisional Ammunition Column; escort ½ 24th Punjabis.

[2] 4.7 Naval Guns mounted in the bows of Horse Boats.

[3] G.S.O., I., was told to request S.N.O. to send a gunboat ahead as an advanced guard to Column C.

[4] Land Section of this column, the other section in ships.

[5] Land Section of it.

13. It will be accepted as a principle by G.O.C. Columns, when the Division is advancing in two or more parallel columns, that, should one of the columns meet with solid resistance, the neighbouring column will at once assist its progress by the turning manœuvre.

14. The S.N.O. to arrange that one of his gunboats will follow the tail of the ship convoy, which will advance up river from Kutunie when the A.Q.M.G. of the division indicates that move.

4.30 p.m.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C. CAVALRY BRIGADE

You will move at 8 a.m. to-morrow to turn the northern end of the Zeur entrenchments, reporting to me whether these entrenchments are held or abandoned.

Should they be held you will menace the enemy's line of retreat on Ctesiphon and endeavour to capture his guns.

I do not anticipate that Zeur will be held, as the Air Service reported last night (17th-18th November) that the Turkish Light Detachment, estimated at 400 Cavalry and 1,200 Camel Corps, was seen to fall back some 2 miles along the river, where a steamer with barges was observed.

Should Zeur not be held, carry out the service of exploration to the west and south-west, and generally ensure the security of the Division to the westward till the late afternoon.

If the enemy are within reach of your pursuit, capture guns and steamer if possible.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C. COLUMN C.

You will advance at 7.30 a.m. to-morrow, 19th November, by the right bank of the Tigris with your column, plus 1 section 17th Company Sappers and Miners, in order to

sweep the right bank of hostile Arabs from the numerous villages on the river bank, should they show signs of resistance.

Reference Map 21, you will see an entrenchment marked in right hand top corner of square 96, and in the neighbourhood of the entrenchment to the westward, "Arab Camp Fort and houses." (This is all part of what is called Jumeisa Village on map.) If you are fired at seriously from this locality you will attack and burn the village, but, in view of your numbers, I do not think that you will meet with any resistance. I am sending the Naval Flotilla and the 4.7 guns in horse-boats (one 4-inch is mounted on the forecastle of the *Firefly* and a 6-pounder on its upper fighting deck, which has a fair command over the banks. The *Shushan* and *Mahsoudieh* also have pom-poms, which should be very useful) to accompany your column—keeping slightly ahead so as to assist your progress with artillery fire if necessary. For this reason it will be desirable for you to keep near the river bank if possible (by the usual village path), as the track inland is at places some 3 miles distant from the river. By keeping near the bank you would be also in sight of Column B. and A. advancing on Zeur.

If Zeur is held, I desire your co-operation by the right bank, by your enfilade rifle and machine-gun fire, combined with Naval Flotilla guns, which will soon make the Zeur entrenchments untenable. There is an entrenchment shown at Baghdadie, on the right bank south of Zeur. I do not think it will be held in face of our numbers, but if it is you must rush it, after bombardment by Naval Flotilla.

The S.N.O., on board the *Firefly*, has a copy of these instructions. Arrange your plan together.

I am sending the Assistant Political Officer with you. He will be able to advise you as to the Arabs, etc. He sent a letter to Ajil yesterday at Jumeisa to give him more chance of coming in, as I want a quiet river. So do not

begin firing on them or burning their villages, unless they molest you.

The reason I am not sending guns with you is that I do not think they would be able to get along by the river bank. I hope that the news of your advancing on right bank will reach Nureddin with Arab exaggeration and induce him to regard his right bank dispositions of his troops more seriously.

OPERATION ORDERS FOR THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 60

21st November, 1915.

Reference Map No. 22.

INFORMATION.

1. According to intelligence and Air Service reports, the enemy, estimated at 10,000 to 11,000[6] troops and 30 guns, is in position at Ctesiphon, astride the river, and is distributed as follows:—

7,500 men on Left Bank of the Tigris in the lines of Ctesiphon as follows: 1,500 to 2,500 men in the first line of entrenchments and a reserve of 4,000 to 5,000 men at Qusabah destined to occupy the second line of entrenchments[7] some two miles north of the first line. These lines extend from the river bank to a distance of 6 miles inland respectively, *vide* Map 22, the 2nd line being echelonned back at some 3,400 yards average distance from the 1st line, though longer in places. Aerial reconnaissance reports that this reserve of 4,000 men and a battery is advancing from Qusabah to occupy the 1st line entrenchments at V.P.

[6] I purposely put the enemy in my published orders at the lowest estimate in order not to dishearten my troops.

[7] The second line entrenchments were only partially completed.

On the right bank of the Tigris an estimated garrison of 3,500 men is installed in redoubts and entrenchments on that bank. The troops of the right bank are connected by boat-bridge at Qusabah with those on the left bank.

INTENTION.

2. The G.O.C. will attack the enemy's position on the Left Bank of the Tigris (this force has an impassable river in its rear), with the object of destroying it by throwing it into either the Tigris or the Diala.

In order to do this he will contain and hold the enemy in front with his Minimum Force, whilst with his Maximum Force he will execute a turning manœuvre against the enemy's extreme left flank and rear. This turning move will be preliminary to a decisive attack by the Principal Mass against that flank of the enemy which has already been turned.

In other words that decisive effort is directed against one of the enemy's flanks, viz., his Left, or Eastern, flank, the objectives, on which the different attacks by separated forces (at effective field artillery range from each other) will converge, being selected before deployment.

PREPARATORY ATTACK: MINIMUM FORCE. Brig.-Gen. HOGHTON, Comdg.

3. Column "C." 17th Infy. Brig. (less ½ battn.).
Divisional troops.
10th Brig., R.F.A. (less 2 Batteries).
86th Battery, R.G.A.
48th Pioneers.
No. 17 Co. Sappers and Miners.
1 Pack Wireless Set.
Divisional Cavalry Squadron.
1 Brit. and 2 Ind. Sections Field Ambulance.

Column "C" will move forward at 2 p.m. to-day along the Baghdad road and progress as far as and inclusive of Square J. 4. General Hoghton will move on a front of some 1,500 yards, or a mile, and will endeavour in every way to make a display of force; his right should rest on telegraph line.

Time of attack. At daylight, 22nd November, he will move forward and commence his preparatory attack frontally against that part of the enemy's 1st line which extends from middle of Sq. I. 4 to 1,000 yards south. Aided by spade and entrenching tool and the Divisional Artillery, he will work his way forward to within long rifle range of the enemy if possible. Not only is his *rôle* to pin the enemy down in his position, but by making a great display and pretence of force to induce the enemy to bring reserves to this menaced part of his position. He will utilise all dry canals, water-cuts and accidental terrain for establishing himself solidly close to the enemy.

General Hoghton will not make his attack a decisive one until he sees the Principal Mass, or General Reserve, under General Delamain moving forward. Having got into the enemy's position, General Hoghton should sweep to the southward in order to assist the naval flotilla in its passage through the new cut in the river, Square J. 6.

Naval Flotilla.

4 4.7-in. guns on horse-boats.
2 5-in. guns 86th H. By.
N.B.—2 5-in. guns on barge with Naval Flotilla.

4. The Naval Flotilla will co-operate on the river in the attack on the enemy's position as follows:—

Naval Flotilla gunboats, the 4.7-in. Naval guns and two 5-in. guns on barges, will co-operate from the river, taking up position south-east of Bustan in Sq. K. 4. The zone of

operations of the 4.7-in. Naval guns and the Naval Flotilla gunboats and the objective zone to be swept by their fire will be that portion of the hostile position south-east of where the Baghdad road runs through Sq. J. 5. They should endeavour to locate and engage all hostile guns which open fire within this area, but should quit the guns to engage any moving infantry, whether advancing or retiring, and should carefully watch for any infantry moving up the Right bank towards our boat-bridge. As regards pursuit a free hand is left to the S.N.O.

TURNING ATTACK. Column B.

Commanding, Brig.-Gen. Hamilton.
18th Infantry Brigade.
63rd Battery, R.F.A.
1 Brit. and 3 Ind. Secns. Field Ambulance.
1 Pack Wireless Set.

ROLE OF THE TURNING ATTACK

Cavalry Column.

Comdg. Maj.-Gen. Sir C. Melliss.

Troops—
Cavalry Bde. (Brig.-Gen. Roberts).
Maxim Battery.
76th Punjabis.
Motor Machine Gun Secn.
1 Pack Wireless Set.
Cavalry Bde. Ammtn. Col.
Cavalry Bde. Field Amb.

After the battle has been well commenced, the turning attack, with which the Cavalry Column will work, on its exterior flank (some 2 miles), will attack the left flank and rear of the enemy's second line of entrenchments, thus engaging the Turkish general reserve and drive it from the field.

This turning attack must be pushed with boldness, vigour, and resolution; nothing must stop it.

The Objective is through Qusabah village "Camp" on river bank. This is behind the enemy's second line entrenchments.

Although the Cavalry Column and 18th Mixed Brigade are independent commands, the two commanders will work in intimate co-operation and understanding, and mutual support and unity of intention. The Cavalry column should be able to render second line of enemy's trenches untenable by enfilade and reverse H.A. Fire; and the effect should also be to cause the retreat of the garrison of the first line of entrenchments, when they hear our guns in their rear.

The G.O.C. turning attack column, General Hamilton, should commence his attack about 7.30 a.m., i.e., well after Column "C" should have commenced the frontal attack.

PRINCIPAL MASS OR GENERAL RESERVE

6. Commanding Troops: Maj-Gen. Delamain.
16th Infantry Brigade.
82nd Battery, R.F.A.
1/5 Hants Howitzers.
Half No. 22 Co. Sappers and Miners.
Half 30th Brigade—Comdg.: Col. Climo.
2/7 Gurkhas.
Half 24th Punjabis.
2nd Brit. and 3 Ind. Secns. Field Amb.

ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL MASS OR GENERAL RESERVE

The Principal Mass will be launched forward to the attack of the Vital Point (marked "V.P." on the map), by order of the G.O.C. Division, under whose direction the General Reserve remains until launched to the attack. The advance of the General Reserve or Principal Mass is the signal for the whole force to engage and move forward against the enemy. Every effort will be made by the Artillery fire of the Divisional Artillery and General Reserve or Principal Mass to cover "V.P." with projectiles in or-

der that a clear avenue of approach may be swept for the General Reserve or Principal Mass, which is the hammer blow to give us victory.

ACTION IF COUNTER-ATTACKED, ETC.

7. If any other portion of the force is counter-attacked, all it has to do is to hold on. The violence of the attack of the General Reserve or Principal Mass will be increased and success at the "Vital Point" must give victory everywhere.

Should any body of the troops lose its way in the dark it will be able at daylight to co-operate with the general great turning attack of the three attacks against the enemy's flank and rear.

Let all Commanding Officers impress on officers and men what our King and Country expect of us at this moment—for the news of the impending battle has reached London and Simla—and that the half-trained Turk and undisciplined Arab battalions have never yet stood for the bayonet when resolutely charged. The attack of all must be characterised with vigour and resolution. As regards pursuit by the Cavalry Column special instructions have been issued.

ASSEMBLY.

8. The points of assembly for the Principal Mass, Turning attack, and Cavalry Column, have been communicated confidentially to G.O.C.'s of these columns, who are making their own arrangements to fix these points, which will be reached under cover of darkness to-night. All will march as one body under arrangements of General Delamain —first to the position to be taken up by the Principal Mass, after which the remainder will proceed along the track or dry canal. The turning attack column will reach its point, three miles beyond the position of the Principal Mass, and

the Flying Column then proceed on to where General Melliss will take up his position. All concealment possible will be taken, but the enemy's patrols will surely get news of this move. This cannot be helped.

AIR SERVICE.

9. The Flight Commander will receive special instructions *re* the *rôle* of the Air Service in battle. Its principal duty will be to give information as to the direction of retreat of the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field and to ensure the service of observation and information *re* any reinforcements coming from Baghdad to assist the enemy, and any movement of the enemy on the Right bank.

DIVISIONAL AMMUNITION COLUMN.

10. Divisional Ammunition Column will be distributed according to the orders of the B.G.R.A. as follows:—

Cavalry Brigade. Ammunition Column with Cavalry Column.
Divisional Ammunition Column (Land Section).
With Column "B." (63rd Battery, R.F.A.) 9 wagons.
With Column "A." (82nd Battery) 5 wagons, 10 A.T. carts.
(1/5 Hants Howitzers Battery) 12 A.T. carts.
With Column "C." (76th Battery, R.F.A.) 4 wagons, 10 A.T. carts.
River Section (at Lajj).

MEDICAL.

11. Position of Advanced Dressing Stations will be selected by Column Commanders. The line of evacuation of wounded will be to the tent division of field ambulance.

DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS.

12. Will close at Lajj at 2 p.m. and open with the Divisional Troops with Column "C" at that hour. During the action, Divisional Headquarters will be near the Divisional Artillery in rear of right flank Column "C."

PART II

RATIONS.

13. In addition to emergency rations one full day's rations will be carried on the man, also as much water as possible. One day's food is to be loaded up in unit charge and left at Lajj with the Divisional Train, which will be under the smallest possible baggage guard detailed from the weakly men.

ESCORT TO DIVISIONAL TRAIN, ETC.

14. Escort to Divisional Train and ships at Lajj will be half battn. 103d. L.I.

B. G. PEEL, *Capt.*,
for Col., General Staff.

OPERATION ORDERS FOR THE RETIREMENT TO KUT

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 67

Nov. 25th, 1915.

INFORMATION.

1. The enemy had retreated to a position he has fortified on the Diala River, and to another position E., i.e., on this side of the Diala. This he is digging in. The bulk of the hostile force is 9 miles from us.

INTENTION.

2. Therefore the G.O.C., considering that he has suffi-

ciently waited in the worst tactical and strategical position that can be imagined, has decided that political reasons are not sufficiently strong to risk disaster for them. Consequently he has decided to march to Lajj at 8.30 a.m. to-morrow—where in tactical security he can await reinforcements, ammunition and food convoy.

3. The Division will march to Lajj to-morrow in 1 column. STARTING POINT on road ½ mile E. of camp will be indicated by G.S.O. III.

Order of march:—

(*a*) Column B [8] (head to pass starting point at 8.30 a.m.).

(*b*) Divisional Troops, i.e., 17th Co. S. & M., Pack Wireless.

(*c*) Interval of 1,000 yards.

(*d*) Column "A" (less 1 Mixed Bde.).

4. REAR GUARD. 1 Mixed Brigade Column "A," Cavalry Brigade.

LEFT FLANK GUARD. 1 ditto Company Col. "B," to be in position on left flank at 8.30 a.m.

5. DIVISIONAL TRAIN, including all tent divisions Field Ambulance, followed by 86th Heavy Battery.

will rendezvous at starting point at 6.45 a.m. and move off in order of march of columns at 7 a.m., preceding main body by three miles.

ESCORT. ½ Bn. Col. "B."
48th Pioneers.
1 Troop Div. Cavalry.

CAMP COLOUR PARTIES will march at head of the Divisional Train.

DIV. H.Q.

6. Div. Hd. Qrs. will march at head of Col. "A" with remainder of Div. Cav. Sqdn.

[8] Less 48th Pioneers and 3 double companies Infantry.

MEDICAL.

7. Two bearer sub-divns. Field Amb. are allotted to Col. "A" and one to Col. "B." To complete these units to proper strength 8 stretcher-bearers per Inf. unit will report to S.M.O. at Field Ambulance bivouac at 7 a.m.

HALT AND BIVOUAC, 26th November.

The A.Q.M.G. preceding the force to Lajj will make all arrangements regarding bivouac—a sketch of which is attached.

B. G. PEEL, *Capt.*,
for Colonel, General Staff.

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 70

29th November, 1915.

ORGANISATION.

1. The force will for battle purposes be grouped again into Mixed Brigades and Cavalry Brigade, as in 6th Division Order of Nov. 4th, but with modifications.

16th Mixed Brigade.	16th Infy. Bde. 82nd Battery, R.F.A. ½ No. 22 Co. S. & M. 3 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 2 F.A.
17th Mixed Brigade.	17th Infantry Bde. ½ No. 17 Co. S. & M. 2 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 2 F.A. Maxim Battery.
18th Mixed Brigade.	18th Infantry Bde. 63rd Battery, R.F.A. ½ No. 22 Co. S. & M. 2 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 106 F.A.

30th Mixed Brigade or the General Reserve.	30th Brigade Inf. (incl. R. W. Kents and 48th Pioneers). 10th Brigade R.F.A. (less 2 Bys.). 2 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 106 F.A. 1/5 Hants Howr. By. (attd. 10th Brigade R.F.A.).

Cavalry Brigade (now increased by 14th Hussars, Cav. Bde., F. Amb.).

2. The organisation will come into force at once, and after leaving Azizieh Mixed Brigades will bivouac together.

Divisional Troops.

3. Divisional Troops:—

1 Sq. 23rd Cavalry.
104th H.B. (less 1 Secn.).
86th Battery, R.G.A. (when available).
Divl. Amtn. Col. (Land and Water Secn. Barge 8.).
4.7 guns.
1 Pack Wireless Set (horsed).
2 Pack and 1 Wagon Wireless Sets (when available).
Bridge Train.
Searchlight Section.
Army Signal Co.
Advance Ordnance Depot.
Aeroplanes.
1 Bearer Sub-Divn. No. 1 F.A.
Tent Sub-Divns. Nos. 1, 2 and 106 F.A.

B. G. Peel, *Capt.*,
for Colonel, General Staff.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DEFENCE OF KUT-AL-AMARA

(FROM MY ORDER NOTE-BOOK, DECEMBER 2nd, 1915.)

Northern Sector Block-house line with redoubts and second line also....General Delamain, 16th Brigade.
Eastern Sector, including Fort .....General Hoghton, 17th Brigade.
Southern Sector .....General Hamilton, 18th Brigade.
General Reserve .....30th Brigade (General Melliss) in Kut town.

I asked for a list of all Engineering Stores from C.R.E. as soon as possible.

Also I desired to know the amount of Supplies in hand.—Colonel Annesley.

I asked for amount of Ammunition, gun and rifle.—Colonel Chitty.

A.Q.M.G.

ORDERS TO C.R.E. The old Turkish bridge of boats to be brought to Kut from down river below the fort and thrown across at Kut itself, to enable me to throw troops on right bank if I want to do so. A STRONG BRIDGE-HEAD must be established on right bank to protect the bridge, consisting of 3 redoubts, 800 yards apart and about half a mile from the river bank.

THE BRIGADIER-GENERAL COMMANDING R.A. to report to me at once the best position for the installation of the heavy guns and the bulk of artillery with the primary object of a good fire sweep of likely avenues of approach by enemy.

The CAVALRY BRIGADE to raid for cattle in country around in the next two days.

All grain and supplies with the merchants in Kut to be commandeered. All Arab inhabitants to be turned out of the town and 20 principal Arabs to be kept as hostages.

Strong Police detachment for the town to be furnished by 30th Brigade.

A Fire Brigade company to be organised for the town.

Ammunition and supplies must be placed in separate magazines, several in different places.

All native transport drivers and followers to be made available for grinding grain by native hand-mills.

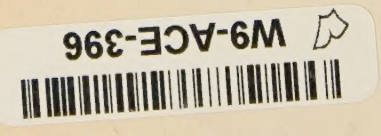
The Cavalry Brigade to be encamped on the eastern outskirts of the town.

Such are the pencilled "instructions on principle" I handed to Colonel Evans to get out in Operation Orders and to work on as soon as we arrived at Kut. There were no entrenchments, as far as I knew, but there was a square walled enclosure called a "Fort," useful against Arabs, and a line of block-houses established by General Gorringe.

It will be seen that I had no time to establish a bridge at Kut, with strong bridge-head—for no works of defence whatever existed there, and my men were too exhausted by the march to do anything but sleep and eat for two days. Had I been able to use the right bank with a defensible bridge-head, I should have conducted an active defence—the defensive-offensive—which would have made all the difference in the world.

Date Due

JUN 6-'30			
APR 25'31			
APR 12'33			
OCT 13'34			
MAY 8'35			



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